

# CITY AND NATION IN THE ITALIAN UNIFICATION

*The National Festivals of Dante Alighieri*

MAHNAZ YOUSEFZADEH



## Italian and Italian American Studies

Stanislao G. Pugliese

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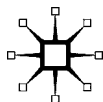
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City and Nation  
in the Italian Unification

The National Festivals of Dante Alighieri

*Mahnaz Yousefzadeh*

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To Bobbie and Tom Gottschalk and to Dick Trexler  
For the chance



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## Abbreviations

|      |   |
|------|---|
| ASCF | Archivio Storico Comune di Firenze.                     |
| ASF  | Archivio di Stato di Firenze.                           |
| BNCF | Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze.               |
| BARF | Biblioteca Archivio Storico del Risorgimento in Firenze |
| RST  | Rassegna Storica Toscana                                |



## Introduction

*The virile Italian heart would willingly sacrifice Michelangelo, Rafael, and Dante for a warrior who would lead her toward military victory.<sup>1</sup>*

*The 1865 Dante Celebration, the final scene in the fantastic drama of the Risorgimento.<sup>2</sup>*

In May 1865, 50,000 Italians undertook a pilgrimage to Florence in order to honor the six hundredth birthday of Dante Alighieri. The first national aggregate of workers, students, academics, artists, professionals, political groups, and ideological factions from the recently united cities and provinces, the Centenary was the most lavish and expensive festival ever hosted by Florence. Denominated alternatively a national, European, and secular festa, the affair ultimately materialized as an eclectic Italian monument with extraordinary political, social, and cultural significance.

This book is the first full-length study of both the years of preparation preceding and the execution of the actual three-day commemoration. It addresses the dynamics of identity formation during the turbulent years immediately following Italian unification. More specifically, it examines the cultural and political tensions that emerged as the new state defined itself and as divergent attempts to forge a “proper” ground for Italy’s legitimacy collided.

The study thereby forms part of the historiographical efforts to analyze the function of culture within Italian nation-state formation. Subsequent to Richard C. Trexler’s pioneering *Public Life in Renaissance Florence*,<sup>3</sup> which brought attention to the importance of public ceremonial activity for politics, historians of modern Italy

have turned to this theme as a means to investigate national unification. Trexler demonstrated how urban rituals within Renaissance Florence organized, generated, and transformed the political life of the city. A significant number of Italian historians, developing this thesis, have explored the role of urban ceremonial forms in the construction of the nation-state. These scholars are often in fact inspired by the phenomenon dubbed the “crisis” or “death” of the Italian nation, a contemporary notion that has emerged from the simultaneous rise of regionalist movements and supranational political bodies such as the New Europe.

In search of the roots of this “crisis,” historians have turned their attention toward the “production” of patriotic traditions during and in the aftermath of the nineteenth-century birth of the Italian state. The construction of collective myths, in particular, has garnered vast attention. National festivals, patriotic pedagogy, the politics of monument building, the topography of naming (*toponomastica*), the exploitation of symbols and, most recently, the construction of a nationalist literary canon have provided fertile ground for such scholarship.<sup>4</sup>

The present study, as a contribution to this historiography, focuses on the 1865 festa as a key moment of Italian nation-state formation. Following years of preparation, the event culminated in a three-day celebration that can be considered a microcosm of unification. It exposed the friction, relations, and contradictions of the state-building process. The discord sprouted from inraelite strife, the gap between the “official” and “real” Italy, the center-periphery dynamic, and the struggle between modernity and tradition.

A detailed microstudy of the 1865 festa not only permits the investigation of an early period of the Italian modern state. It also allows for exploration of an episode in which the Italian “founding fathers” conceptualized and performed a model of national identity that represents an alternative to the established prototype.

In the spring of 1865 two coinciding historical incidents rendered Florence the sociopolitical and cultural hub of the new nation-state. The first was the passage of the 1865 laws that united Italy juridically and administratively. The second was the transfer of the capital from Turin to Florence. After years of debate over the constitutional design of the new state, the 1865 Reform Laws

extended throughout Italy the centralized administrative design of Piedmont.<sup>5</sup> Because the laws were passed with the assumption that the “forced creation of unity through administrative measures under a common parliament, backed by a national army, would produce both good policies and good individuals by forging the diverse communities of peoples into one strong and great self-governing nation,”<sup>6</sup> they produced enormous controversy.

By and large, the regional and local Italian elite looked upon the adoption of these decrees with suspicion. These groups viewed the implementation of such laws as an instrument of Piedmont’s colonization efforts, as part of a Piedmontese attempt to appropriate the entire Italian peninsula. These elites preferred a more decentralized framework for the constitution of the unified state, one permitting strong local control and autonomy at the level of communes.

On the eve of the passage of the Reform Laws, through a series of compromises between Victor Emmanuel and the French emperor, the capital of Italy was transferred from Turin to Florence. During this period, Florence was transformed from the capital of a province (Tuscany) to the capital of the new state. The city thus became a stage for local and national antagonisms, and in particular, for intraelite tussles. The Florentine political group, from 1859 to 1860 a prominent component of the once relatively unified body of the Italian Historical Right (the Moderate Liberal monarchists), now assumed the task of directing the anti-Piedmontese sentiments of the Italian regional elites.<sup>7</sup>

The elites thus found themselves struggling or mediating between two inclinations. One, the opposition to centralization and modernization, represented a response to the threat that these movements posed to the vitality of local/municipal customs and identities. The local elite groups, in fact, were the inheritors of the local traditions, charged with their protection. Yet they were also the lead promoters of a new unitary patriotic symbolism. These factions, in other words, had to pursue strategies that promoted the national, or else they would have risked their demise within the new state; but they could not do so at the expense of the local. Among the various strategies used for the multiple task, the *nationalization* of local heroes proved the most ingenious.

No case exemplifies the latter tactic better than the Florentine effort to nationalize the figure of Dante. In order to reconcile local



attachments to “little Tuscany,” dubbed *Toscanina*, with a modern concept of the nation-state, the Florentine elite had to locate within Tuscany a topos that lent itself to a monarchist/nationalist appropriation. At the same time, it had to secure an integral position for Tuscan identity within this setting. The festa in honor of Dante, via the endorsement of Dante as both local Florentine poet and national prophet, was set up in order to accomplish this feat. “Dante,” or his 1865 Centenary, also helped guarantee the status of Florence as the cultural center of the new nation-state, indeed, as the “Athens of the new Italy.” At the core of the festa, therefore, stood not only the idea of honoring the new standing of Florence. Also at that center were the Florentine efforts to consolidate the notion of an alternative center to Turin, formerly the unchallenged political, military, and administrative capital of Italy.

This book, then, investigates the precise maneuvers by means of which the Tuscan elite forged a novel vision of the nation and of a national culture—grounded in a longue durée of intellectual and cultural history rather than the modern territorial nationalism of Piedmont—one that crystallized in the myth of the Florentine Dante as the prophet of Italian unification. From a Florentine center, they conducted a national campaign that endorsed this myth, utilizing the institutions of civil society rather than the official sphere of parliament. In doing so, this elite not only elevated the standing of Florence nationally, but the very status of the local, especially that of the municipality.

## I.

[Chapter 1](#) traces the foundations of the Dante myth inside and outside Italy. More specifically, it focuses on the ways in which Dante was utilized as a device to counter Piedmontese hegemony. Comparing the Dante Centenary to the Festa dello Statuto, the Piedmontese event ordained as an official national festa throughout Italy, I show how the Centenary functioned as a means of distinguishing Tuscan from Piedmontese constructions of national identity. By suggesting that the Centenary replace the Festa dello Statuto as the official Italian national festa, Florentine organizers positioned Tuscans as the rightful cultural leaders of the new Italy.<sup>8</sup> Stated in other terms, the Centenary did not represent an

Italian resistance to hegemony in general; it represented a counter to Piedmontese domination.

The interregional (Tuscany/Piedmont) struggle for national leadership, played out through the Centenary, cannot be divorced from a similarly tense center/periphery dynamic. Integral to the administrative centralization and modernization of Italy were the status of the cities vis-à-vis the nation in general. To what extent could cities retain bureaucratic, administrative, and local autonomy? Would the unified national structure engulf these urban hubs?

Chapter 2 illustrates the way in which the Florentine elite responded to these queries. It investigates the organizational structures of the Centenary in the context of the administrative reform laws of 1865. Discussing the relative roles played by the Florentine municipality, the provincial government of Florence, and the national government, it demonstrates that the Centenary enterprise was principally the work of the Florentine municipality. Contributions and interference by the national government were minimal. The Centenary organizers arranged a national festival that, while proclaiming notions such as *patria*, *nazione*, and *Italia*, promoted through its very organizational structure strong municipal identities, therefore decentralist principles. Not only was the national festa conceived, funded, and spread throughout Italy from a municipal nucleus; also, the symbolism of the event celebrated and affirmed centuries-old municipal traditions.

Chapter 2 addresses another matter fundamental to unification, one that has equally afflicted the last 150 years of Italian history: the supposed “fissure” between the “real” and the “official” Italy. Advocates of this discourse hold that Parliament advances an “official” Italy that does not represent the “real” nation, the latter corresponding to the more organic institutions of civil society. The Centenary organizers, acutely conscious of the “official versus real” polemic, made an opportunistic (and, as we will see, paradoxical) determination as to the set of institutions with which the festa would be most closely allied. Irresolute and ultimately unsuccessful in obtaining Parliament’s endorsement of the festa, these leaders instead used the instruments of civil society and public opinion in order to publicize Dante as a national poet, and the Centenary as both a national festa and a reflection of the “real” Italy.

Indeed, precisely because it was unsanctioned by Parliament, and because it deployed the institutions of civil society in order to generate public support, the Dante festa posited itself as a more authentic and organic alternative to the Piedmontese Festa dello Statuto. It was via the turn to civil society rather than to the government that the Centenary enterprise succeeded in becoming the primogenitor of educational, voluntary, fund-raising networks with a *national* scope.

The mobilization of national support for the idea and ideals of the Dante Centenary, however, proved less difficult than the improvisation of the actual content of the festa program. Indeed, the creation of an agenda with which *all* Italians, not only Florentines, would identify represented the thorniest of tasks. [Chapter 3](#) tackles the ways in which the challenge was met. It analyzes the animated debates over the design of the festa program. Resolving internal disputes concerning the solemnity and dignity of the plan, and also responding to external charges of “unpatriotic municipalism,” the Centenary composers continuously revised the agenda over the course of a year. In the main, they wrestled with the following fundamental questions: Which aspects of the past were appropriate for recall during a modern national festa? To what extent was the inclusion of openly Florentine traditions appropriate to a celebration of national unity? Was Dante’s legacy a Republican or a Monarchic one? Should the festa incorporate Catholic rituals? To what degree and in what manner should the festa involve “the people”?

Through a close reading of the minutes of the Florentine Centenary Commission meetings, of personal correspondences, and of newspaper articles, I disclose the contemporary replies to these inquiries. Individuals, we will see, passionately grappled with options and ultimately made decisions—visible in the various versions of the program—as to which precise traditions they had inherited, and by extension, as to the true foundation of the modern nation-state which they were helping to build.

As people and groups undertook such matters, the paradox of Italy’s “modernity” unfolded. The rhetoric of the “modern” during the time of the creation of the Centenary program advocated the rule of the people and the notion of the “plebiscite.” Yet by censoring the customs and activities of traditional festivals, this

“modernity” not only and predictably purged the Catholic and religious element, it also managed to erase the very popular and “spontaneous” enthusiasm of the people whom it claimed to represent.

The configuration of the public that actually participated in the national festa—the protagonists of the event—is the subject of [chapter 4](#). Through quantitative and textual analysis, the chapter investigates who exactly was included in and excluded from the commemoration. More crucially, it unveils the logic of that inclusion and exclusion. Which organizations, social groups, and individuals desired participation and why? What significance did they attach to their participation? Did they negotiate with the organizers as to the mode of their involvement, and if so, what form did those negotiations take?

Though the Centenary was never an official festa—one in which participation was obligatory—it ultimately emerged as a stunning success. Ceaselessly defining the Centenary as a “solemn celebration of national unity,” the Florentine elite’s public relations’ campaign managed to mobilize not only those social bodies that would predictably identify with the Moderate Liberals’ national cause but also their ideological foes. Catholic schools such as Scuole Pie are prime examples of the latter. Even Masonic lodges ventured from their secret existences in order to render homage to a *brother*, Dante Alighieri. The appeal of the Centenary was so great that women, as a group whose participation in the festa was circumscribed, coordinated private “Dante parties,” thereby creating sites where they could more actively partake in the national patriotic celebration.

The extraordinary fact that twice as many Italian worker societies attended the Dante Centenary than visited their own annual National Congresses the year before is no doubt the strongest testimony to the elite’s capacity to capture the attention and imagination of the *popolani*. Such worker societies even included the Democratic Fratellanza Artigiana, revealing just how remarkable was this participation.

The Dante Centenary became so associated with “the people” that the few who absented themselves from the event were, ironically, an elite group whose very names were coterminous with Italian cultural nationalism: Manzoni, Carducci, and Tommaseo.

These, and other men of letters, distanced themselves from a popular festa that, in their view, degenerated and diluted the most exalted manifestation of Italian culture—namely, Dante’s poetry.

How to explain the astonishing enthusiasm of Italian cities and local entities of all ideological persuasions and geographical origins for this “voluntary” festa? The conclusion of [chapter 4](#) answers by probing the way in which the event was perceived as a legitimate patriotic alternative to the idea of the nation offered by Piedmontese rule. If the Centenary seemingly provided an opportunity to Italians of every class and region to express their patriotic zeal, for many of these people participation in the event also signaled their espousal of the end of Piedmontese hegemony.

[Chapter 5](#) considers the press as the political arm of the festa. It discusses the journalism (that this journalism was so copious is itself ironic: Florence had been deemed the “capitale del felicissimo regno degli analfabeti”<sup>9</sup>) that addressed the Centenary. At the event the members of the press were situated at the *head* of the procession, leading the representatives of the Italian nation. Until that moment, the position had been reserved for the churchmen or state/municipal officials. This fact points up the rise of journalism and of public opinion as a specific political force. Indeed, using the printed press as a primary pedagogical tool, the Centenary organizers unleashed a “culture war” in which political and religious groups deployed the symbolic material of the Centenary in order to make arguments concerning culture, history, ethics, aesthetics, and most importantly, the precise nature of Italian national identity.

## II.

My argument has largely emerged from two seemingly contingent factors. The first is the unorganized state of the Dante Centenary archives. The second is the absence of detailed studies on the subject that I address. The massive material on the Dante Centenary, lodged in the Archivio Storico del Comune di Firenze, remains uncatalogued. It lies today in the same unorganized condition in which it was deposited by the Centenary Commission in 1865. The initial task of my research, then, was to conduct an inventory of and then to edit the documents. This was followed by the historical

reconstruction of the Centenary event from the vast accumulation of paperwork that the Centenary Commission had left behind. The collection of personal correspondences held at the Biblioteca Nazionale and Biblioteca Marucelliana in Florence complement the Centenary Commission documents, adding a private dimension to the overall data. I have also conducted an exhaustive search in the Gabinetto Vieusseux, Archivio Storico di Risorgimento, and the periodical collection at Forte Belvedere (where I located many journalistic sources, both periodicals and pamphlets).

Needless to say, established historiographical and theoretical paradigms guided both my “discovery” of festa documents and the way in which I have pieced them into a single narrative. Yet the reconstruction of the chronology of the proceedings also led me to “surprising” facts that challenge certain accepted historiographical tenets.

One such disclosure materialized when, in search of sources that might provide clues about the formation of Italian national identity, I uncovered many salient statements not in the public realm or in official discourse but in the private and intimate world of personal exchanges. My investigation of a national public occasion led me deep into the heart of the private. I found, for example, the diary selection of the wife of a Florentine politician who, during the evening of the opening day of the festa, gushes over her love for Dante: “We are alone up there, and I venerate Dante, as one of our national prophets, and I unite myself with laic love! The love that one renders to Him.”<sup>10</sup> A man writing to his Florentine friend from Milan declares that the Centenary program is an instrument of a “puerile Tuscan vanity.” The Florentine responds by contending that “if you are a true Italian, I believe I am no less Italian than you (his Milanese friend).”<sup>11</sup> Out of spite, a poet refuses to deliver her poetry to the Dante Academy, as she was not invited to the Centenary festa.

The Centenary documents also contest the pervasive notion that the Italian South lacked enthusiasm for Italian unity.<sup>12</sup> The received wisdom holds that southern civil associations, because “underdeveloped,” did not substantially participate in the political rites of unification and nationhood. Identifying the 1200 letters of registration for the festa, I conducted a statistical analysis of the participating bodies. A description of the cities and associations

*voluntarily* represented at the Dante festa is revelatory. The southern cities and worker societies were relatively *overrepresented* when compared to their northern counterparts. Indeed, the southern regions of Campania (with twelve worker societies) and Sicily (with eight) far exceed those of the northern regions of Piedmont (with five) and Liguria (with three).<sup>13</sup>

The papers within the Centenary archives challenge still another historiographic assumption: that associative practices and social networks in nineteenth-century Italy were largely local enterprises. Contemporary scholarship maintains that these activities lacked a national dimension.<sup>14</sup> To the contrary, I discovered many examples of private literary and cultural initiatives—such as a Dante Lottery in support of the arts, and a fundraising operation arranged for the construction of a monument of Dante—whose networks extended nationally.

A last, but essential finding of my research concerns official celebrations during the period of “Liberal Italy.” It is generally agreed that dynastic personages and icons formed the center of these commemorations. Even recent studies display a dismissive attitude toward official ceremonies that did not have at their core a dynastic image or royal figure. These latter, the scholarship holds, represented responses to mandates made by municipalities rather than to statewide demands. Therefore, the events were “unsuccessful” as national ventures.<sup>15</sup> The following narrative will show that the Centenary flourished not despite, but because it was organized and promoted by a municipality. Moreover, the figure of a Florentine Dante efficiently mobilized and united the heterogeneous fabric of Italian society, perhaps more so than would have a Savoyard monarch.<sup>16</sup>

Given my argument that the Centenary does not entirely support established beliefs concerning Italian national festivals and Italian modernity, it stands as part of a new direction taken by Risorgimento historiography. This research reexamines the conventional image of Liberal Italy as a “state without a nation.” Twentieth-century Marxist and Liberal historians,<sup>17</sup> founding their scholarship on the collapse of the parliamentary regime and the rise of fascism in Italy,<sup>18</sup> have viewed the Risorgimento as a prerogative solely of the elite—one that included little participation of the populace. Insisting on this vertical chasm, the research

has blamed the failures of Italian unification on the elite's inability to communicate "downward," and thereby led a widespread national movement.

Contemporary historians have revised this formulation, which has reached the level of orthodoxy, in two ways.<sup>19</sup> First, they explain the difficulties of nation-building in Italy more in terms of the horizontal struggles and conflicts between the regional *elites* than in terms of a vertical rupture that divided the elite from the populace.<sup>20</sup> A now-classic volume *Della città alla nazione*, edited by Marco Meriggi and Pierangelo Schiera, perhaps best details this position.<sup>21</sup> The volume as a whole affirms that the Italian elite remained faithful to local attachments and interests. Far from leading the nationalist movement, this group never unequivocally accepted the Liberal plans for unification.<sup>22</sup>

On a second front, historians question the assumption of the absence of popular participation within the unification process. Alberto Banti, in his groundbreaking *La nazione del Risorgimento*,<sup>23</sup> is an example. Banti convincingly documents the prevalence of a widespread nineteenth-century literary and cultural nationalism, one with roots in the popular classes.

The Centenary, as suggested, lends support to such novel historiographical positions. It exposes both the elite's ambivalence toward the national, and the widespread participation of Italian civil society within the national ceremony. The festa represents an early moment in the history of the modern Italian nation-state, one in which a sector of the national elite, in the name of the ideals of a "nation," mobilized grassroots fervor and voluntary participation across different classes and sectors. In the process, moreover, this faction elevated rather than decreased the vitality and value of the local.

The process was in no way idyllic. It was wrought with friction. It involved heated negotiations and compromises. The end result, however, was a highly inclusive, diverse, and decentralized festa, at least as compared to its Piedmontese counterpart.

It should be emphasized that while standing as an astonishing accomplishment in 1865, the Centenary did indeed fail in two of its main objectives: to replace the Festa dello Statuto, and to fix the birthday of Dante as the official date of Italian national commemoration. Never in fact repeated, the Centenary remains a unique



national celebration of Italians as citizens rather than as subjects of the state. Given the 1866 war with Austria, and the eventual transfer of the capital to Rome in 1870, Italy soon abandoned the memory of the Centenary. The expansionist policies of the Italian state favored both less ambiguous symbols and more centralized festivals.

By 1884, Dante had passed the political torch to the next “father of the patria,” King Victor Emmanuel II. In an event studied in detail by Bruno Tobia, Italy again embarked on a national pilgrimage, this time to the king’s tomb in the Pantheon.<sup>24</sup> The organizational structure of the 1884 occurrence, as portrayed by Tobia, highlights a shift in the configuration of the Italian center/periphery relation. It is not surprising, but striking, to learn that it was again a private group of *Florentine* citizens who first conceived of and promoted the idea for the pilgrimage. One might speculate that these people were heartened by the successful organization of the Dante Centenary nearly twenty years earlier. The Florentine Promoting Committee envisioned, yet again, a highly decentralized structure for the organization of the celebration. Their stated goal was to maintain the “popular” character of the initiative and to minimize governmental interference.

This time, however, the Commission ran into the opposition of the provincial government of Florence, led by the *prefect* who stood as the quintessential symbol of government intervention. This provincial body refused to grant the Florentine Central Committee the authority to organize the Centenary nationwide.<sup>25</sup> As a result, the functions of the Central Committee were transferred to the Provincial Committee of Rome. Its directorship was handed to the personnel of political conservatives, composed of military men and veterans of war.<sup>26</sup> In addition to the king, also exalted in this national pilgrimage were the various centralized state institutions, including the most centralized and disciplined of all: the army.

Dante Centenaries would never again assume the political role that the one of 1865 played. The 1921 Sixth Centenary of Dante’s death and the 1965 Seventh Centenary of his birth surfaced as scholarly and literary events, but Italian society as a whole barely concerned itself with the affairs.<sup>27</sup>

Still, the popular association of Dante as of the essence of Italian identity, born in the 1865 festa, did not vanish from history with

this event. In 1889, at a moment when Italy was deeply divided along ideological, political, and cultural lines, La Società Dante Alighieri was founded. It exists to this day.<sup>28</sup> Its mandate was to “defend the Italian culture and language.”<sup>29</sup> Going beyond the society’s stated mission, however, its nineteenth-century directors imagined their task as involving the promotion and creation of a vast and all-pervasive concept of Italian identity. In other words, these men resuscitated, in the name of Dante, the principal ideal (recent scholarship dubs it the “myth”) of the Risorgimento: the construction of a single idea of “Italianness.”<sup>30</sup> Thus, according to the society’s second president, Pasquale Villari, the function of La Società Dante Alighieri was to renew the collaborative spirit of the Risorgimento: “a new expedition of the thousand against a more dangerous enemy, because it is of ourselves” (*una nuova spedizione dei mille contro un nemico più pericoloso, perchè è dentro di noi stessi.*)<sup>31</sup> Villari called on Italians to join a spiritual renovation and to suspend internal divisions: “in the name of the great poet, we invite men of every opinion, religion and party, because they are true to and are lovers of the *patria*, to desire the promotion of culture and defend the language” (“*nel nome del gran poeta, noi invitiamo gli uomini di ogni opinione, di ogni religione, di ogni partito, purchè onesti ed amanti della patria, desiderosi di promuoverne la cultura e diffonderene la lingua.*”)<sup>32</sup> The construction of the notion of a true Italian nation would not ground itself on military, economic, or political values and accomplishments but on cultural production. “Italianness” emerges from and via “great Italian culture,” with the figure of Dante (“*nel nome del gran poeta*”), even more so than his literature, operating as a trope for the Italian essence as a whole.

### III.

I conclude this introduction with a discussion of the overarching methodology that I have adopted for the analysis. This book offers a microhistorical scrutiny of one particular event as a means to investigate larger politicocultural topics. Such a method invites the inclusion of the theoretical concerns raised by both cultural and social historians. Cultural history, with its conception of history as a web of signs and symbols that can be studied and interpreted,

approaches the past as a text to be decoded.<sup>33</sup> It assigns primary significance to the meaning of metaphors, symbols, and rituals in the fabrication of social identities.

Social historians, taking as a *given* the social interests, identities, and dominance, which cultural historians insist are *constructed* through signs and symbols, focus on the material relations and formation of social hierarchies. An exclusive study of the symbolic elements of social exchange, they hold, fails to offer a comprehensive analysis of society, for it does not address the specific *institutional* topoi in which the supposed linguistic constructs take place.

A microhistorical narrative allows for a synthesis of the two approaches. In the essay "On Microhistory," Giovanni Levi describes the merger.<sup>34</sup> He notes that, although subjects ceaselessly construct their own identities through signs, they do so according to historical sediments that, while demanding analysis, are not reducible to these signs:

Although customs and the use of symbols are always polysemic, nevertheless they assume more precise connotations from the mobile and dynamic social differentiation. Individuals constantly create their own identities, and groups define themselves according to conflicts and solidarities, which however cannot be assumed a priori but result from dynamics which are the object of analysis.<sup>35</sup>

Guided by Levi's articulation, I have written a narrative of the Dante festa that not only addresses individual and group determinations. Hopefully, the work is also "thick" enough to outline the existing sociopolitical institutions in and by means of which those decisions were made.<sup>36</sup> An understanding of the Centenary festa indeed lies, on the one hand, in the interpretation of cultural signs, that is, of the construction of the myth of Dante as the prophet of Italian nationalism; and on the other hand, in the study of the manner in which these myths were constructed in the name of political and personal ends whose roots lie in prior and extant historical structures. I embrace this dynamic between historical deposits and cultural constructs in order to demonstrate (1) the means by which social identities were transformed, mobilized, represented, and resisted within the sphere of the Dante festa; and (2)

the way these transformations were shaped or limited by the very realities that were altered.

The Dante Centenary festa, in my view, cannot be adequately comprehended via the two predominant theories on festivals. The festa does not easily fit into the premodern safety-valve/carnivalesque celebrations theorized by Peter Burke.<sup>37</sup> Nor does the event slide into the notion of “invention of tradition” advocated by Eric Hobsbawm.<sup>38</sup> Representing an Italian nation other than the one offered by central state institutions, the Centenary certainly contains elements of the subversiveness that Burke discusses. It also strove to construct a new order and legitimacy through ritualistic reference to the past as per the Hobsbawm archetype. Yet because the Centenary pivots precisely on the conflict between these two visions, the event resists both Burke’s and Hobsbawm’s models.

The Dante Centenary, I therefore argue, can be grasped more profoundly through the ideas developed by Antonio Gramsci and Jurgen Habermas, particularly in relation to civil society and the state. The festa, in fact, worked to create an autonomous public, one akin to Habermas’s authentic or civil public sphere.<sup>39</sup> Such a public emerges from the private sphere of individuals, in opposition to court and state institutions. It is true that Habermas’s normative categories situate a critical public space in sites that were not precisely essential to the Centenary: salons, cafes, and literary societies. Yet the “birth” and operation of a public sphere in nineteenth-century Florence otherwise falls in line with Habermas’s argument. Just as Habermas’s emerging public distinguished itself from the court, the Centenary public set itself off from the Parliament, more specifically, from its dramatic representation, the Festa dello Statuto. The analogy holds especially well when we consider the social make-up of these two publics, Habermas’s and that of 1865 Florence. Habermas’s “salons” and the Centenary, in fact, took distance from the court and from Parliament for the same reason: they posited themselves as democratically composed and socially diverse.

While Habermas’s transformation of the public sphere is useful in classifying the topos of the Dante Centenary, his large-scale structural analyses do not readily make way for the empirical and detailed historical investigation that I try to offer. More heuristically

valuable, hence supplementing Habermas in a productive manner, is Gramsci's "molecular" analysis of civil society.

While Gramsci's thesis on the Risorgimento has grown obsolete, his notion of hegemony has gained ever more currency. In fact, Gramsci's enunciation on culture, civil society, and state, so key to his theory of hegemony, effectively brings together the historiographical schism between cultural and social history mentioned above. Gramsci's *topoi* therefore lend themselves to the sort of microhistory that I pursue in this study.

Drawing attention to myth and folklore as essential to politics,<sup>40</sup> Gramsci theorized the institutional spaces in which hegemonic processes take place. To recite a well-known Gramscian notion, political domination emerges not only through coercion (i.e., police power, violent repression in specific moments of uprising, and open class conflict), but also through cultural hegemony: the everyday processes of socialization that "instruct" citizens to think and act in certain fashions. Herein lies the essence of a fundamental Gramscian dictum: "every relation of hegemony is necessarily an educational relationship."<sup>41</sup>

Hegemonic practices exercise their power through a combination of molecular processes and social devices: educational institutions, public meetings, private associations, the press and media, and "conversation" between the more-educated and less-educated strata of the population.<sup>42</sup> Within these institutions of civil society, Gramsci argues, a "normative grammar" is at work:

This is made of the reciprocal monitoring, reciprocal teaching and reciprocal censorship.... This whole complex of actions and reactions come together to create a grammatical conformism to establish 'norms' or judgements of correctness.<sup>43</sup>

The promotion of the "normative grammar" that is operative within civil society is a political act, one as proper to state formation as is government itself. The "grammar" both aids the construction of political hegemonies and offers a ground for counterhegemonic interventions.

Gramsci's work on the relationship between state formation and cultural practices thereby supplies an important theoretical tool for understanding a main theme of this study: the instrumentalization

of the national institutions of civil society on behalf of the political legitimization of Florence. Like Gramsci, I focus attention on the “molecular” processes and reciprocal relationships within the *exchanges* of the festa. I posit these exchanges as pedagogical, thus as sites where political power and social identities are negotiated, formed, and undermined. Gramsci is extremely helpful, moreover, because his type of analysis allows for an historical micro-study that weaves into its fabric language, rituals, and actual social institutions.

Other theories of culture and power adopted by historians, such as those of Michel Foucault, Norbert Elias, and even Habermas, are more appropriate for an analysis dealing with long periods of time, since they address conceptual genealogies, structural transformations, and systemic changes. The “localization of collective memory” project developed by sociologists Maurice Halbwachs and Paul Connerton does not truly lend itself to my view of the Dante Centenary either.<sup>44</sup> Halbwachs and Connerton offer general concepts for an examination of collective memory, but do not display great interest in the specificity of nation-building, which is central to my focus. Gramsci’s theory of the emergence of the modern state via civil society, never separate (in Gramsci’s mind) from the specific problems of the Italian state and of Italian history, renders his formulations more immediately pertinent to the work that follows.



## The Dante Centenary and the Centenary's Dante

*Only a tradition traced back to its national origins, and grounded on the historical, realistic, polemical, and prophetic structure of Dante's poem, could still serve as a spur for the revival of that humbled, uncultivated province of Europe that Italy had become.<sup>1</sup>*

*If they meant to celebrate Dante as the pinnacle of Italian poetry, they indeed chose a very bad time to do so, in this period of prose and of thieves.<sup>2</sup>*

Ironically, the 1865 Centenary in honor of Italy's greatest poet must be understood within the context of a period that Victor Emmanuel called an "age of prose":<sup>3</sup> an epoch in which the poetic heroism of the Risorgimento gave way to the realpolitik of the postunification decades.<sup>4</sup>

The 1861 unification of Italy as an extension of the Piedmontese monarchy was the culmination of a long period of strife among different Italian nationalist factions. From the 1830s until unification, Italian nationalists struggled over not only whether, but how, unification would take place. Should the unified country take on a Republican form of government (as Giuseppe Mazzini and his associations of "Young Italy" promulgated)? Was the pope the best leader to unify the peninsula (as the neo-Guelf Vincenzo Gioberti suggested)? Or should Italy become a monarchy under the Piedmontese king (the position of the northern and central Liberal elite)?



For a brief moment during the wave of 1848 uprisings, Mazzini's revolutionary program for a Republican Italy found ascendancy. While Mazzini and Manin instituted republics in Rome and Venice, respectively, democratic upheaval ousted *ancien regime* rulers across the Italian peninsula. However within a few months—unable to create a united front against the encroaching Austrian army—the republics, and along with them, the Republican model for Italian unification, failed.<sup>5</sup>

With the fall of 1848–1849 republics, not only the Mazzinian but also Gioberti's alternative for Italian unification, which advocated a federation of states presided over by the pope, lost momentum. In April 1848, the once-reformist Pius IX rejected Gioberti's neo-Guelf program. The revolutionary events of 1848 had convinced Pius IX that constitutionalism and governance by the church were essentially incompatible. Gioberti himself would soon abandon federalism in favor of a unitary program.<sup>6</sup>

The proceedings of 1848, in fact, emerged as a justification for a monarchic model of unity, a point made clear by Count Emilio Cavour, the prime minister of Piedmont, who pursued a diplomatic rather than a revolutionary path in his effort to unify Italy. He argued (mostly to the conservatives) that the only way to avoid the “revolutionary excesses” of 1848 was to unite Italy under the House of Savoy, the dynasty of Piedmonte-Sardinia. The 1859 wars of independence, during which Tuscany and Lombardy ousted the Austrian regimes, set the stage for unification, as these regions held plebiscites in order to annex themselves to Piedmont. By 1861, through the military expeditions of Garibaldi and his volunteers in the south, most of the Italian peninsula—with the exception of Rome and Venice—was unified under the Piedmontese monarchy.<sup>7</sup>

The multifaceted problems facing the partially unified Italian nation-state have been amply studied.<sup>8</sup> Cavour's death in 1861 left his heirs with two interrelated tasks: the territorial completion of unification and the consolidation of rule. The new state faced numerous obstacles. In addition to the difficulty of fulfilling its pledge to liberate Venice from Austrians and Rome from papal jurisdiction, it confronted widespread brigandage in the South. By 1864, the government had deployed 100,000 troops there in order to fight a guerrilla-type war.<sup>9</sup> On the political front, the regime led

by the Moderate Liberal monarchists had to contend with challenges from the Democrats as well as the Clerico-Legitimists, both of whom continued to question its legitimacy.<sup>10</sup>

While some Democrats had joined the parliamentary regime and dutifully performed what Clara Lovett dubs “the forced labor of Italian politics,”<sup>11</sup> they remained largely ineffective. The parliamentary Democrats during this period were never strong enough to affect the social and economic policies of the Liberals.<sup>12</sup> The most vital Democratic opposition to the Liberal regime came instead from the extraparliamentary activities of the Democrats. These, expressed mostly through journalism, were organized around worker societies or *Società Operaie*.<sup>13</sup> The Democratic opposition to the regime coalesced over one specific issue: the Roman question. The Democrats viewed the project of Italian revolution as incomplete as long as Rome remained under the control of the pope, and they criticized the government for its policies of appeasement toward Rome.

The Moderate Liberal regime also had to contend with the severe attacks launched by the church. Having been dispossessed of most of the papal territories and possessions, the pope excommunicated the leaders of the Italian state and concentrated on keeping his control over Rome. Having relied on the French troops to protect the city until the 1864 September Convention, the pope then resorted to issuing the *Syllabus of Errors*, condemning “modern civilization” together with liberalism, nationalism, and the separation of church and state. The papacy continued its program of delegitimation of the Italian state throughout the postunification decade. In 1868, it ordered all Catholics to boycott Italian politics and abstain from participating in the national elections.

### Rivalries among the Elite: Consorti and Permanente

Of equal importance, the postunification decade was characterized by internal power struggles among the Moderate ruling elite across the various regions. The conflict was partially fed by the regional elite’s resistance to Piedmontese centralizing policies. These groups viewed the extension of the Piedmontese political

system, the economic policies, and the administration throughout the entire peninsula as the “colonization” or “Piedmontization” of preexisting states. While the fear of common political enemies, namely the Republicans and the pro-Catholics, aligned the Moderates under a single political cause, loyalty toward local traditions, systems of administration, and interests generated a strong anti-Piedmontese predilection. Eugenio Artom, in “Il problema d’un decennio,” describes the matter as follows:

The spirit was revolted by the fact that, inevitably, it was men from Piedmont who prevailed in the leadership of the state, in administration, in the army, in the navy, in the Court; and they were the ones who imposed their political and administrative views on others, often completely misunderstanding the mentality of the other cities. Petty jealousies, grudges (even justified), intolerance, personal disappointments, all of these factors created a widespread resistance to an Italy that was a mere extension of Piedmont.<sup>14</sup>

A September 20, 1864 landmark event brought the sentiments of the regional elite to the fore. At the September Convention, Victor Emmanuel and Napoleon III reached a compromise treaty regarding the status of Rome.<sup>15</sup> The Italian government would move the capital from Turin to Florence, thus forfeiting the idea of Rome as the capital. In return, France would remove its military personnel from the holy city, where it had been protecting the pope’s temporal rule.

The controversial September Convention served as a catalyst that sharpened the differences between Moderates and Democrats. As mentioned, Democrats insisted on a more aggressive and uncompromising stance toward Napoleon and the pope. They viewed the transfer of the capital to Florence as a capitulation to Rome.<sup>16</sup>

The divisions among the Moderates themselves proved more serious. When the Turin elite protested the removal of the capital from their city and took to the streets, they met a fierce response that was led by the minister of interior, the Florentine politician Ubaldino Peruzzi (to be removed from his position within a few days, on September 27, 1864). The event, remembered as the “blood bath of Turin,”<sup>17</sup> intensified the disagreements among the Moderates by exposing the embarrassing regional prejudices of the Piedmontese, who portrayed the transfer to Florence as offensive to

the superior patriotic merit of Savoyard Piedmont. In fact, they saw the move as a violation of Turin's "sacred right."<sup>18</sup> The Florentine statesman Celestino Bianchi expressed a popular opinion when he wrote to Bettino Ricasoli that "the violent reaction of the Turinese to the convention of September has convinced everyone that those people have always thought to enlarge and expand Piedmont, not to make Italy."<sup>19</sup>

The loss of the capital, not to Rome but to what Turin regarded as small, medieval Florence, as well as the harsh repression of public protest, prompted the Turinese to form a faction called *Permanente* with the purpose of defending the prestige of their city. The rivalry between the Piedmontese and the Florentines, in fact, was as much rooted in a mutual sense of cultural superiority as in any realpolitik. The Piedmontese complained that Florence, as opposed to the "modern, spacious, clean, perfect Turin" ("modernissima, spaziosa, pulita, perfetta Torino"),<sup>20</sup> lacked the stature of a capital. Turinese newspapers insisted that Florentine streets were "nauseatingly dirty" and that Florentine traditions such as the Festa di San Giovanni were reactionary and backward.<sup>21</sup> Upon arrival in Florence, the Piedmontese government functionaries and their families found all things brutto<sup>22</sup>: the climate, the city, the customs, the language.<sup>23</sup> This air of superiority exuded even from the Savoyard king who was "uncomfortably" stationed in his new residence at the Palazzo Pitti of Florence.<sup>24</sup> The Italian king missed Turin so intensely that after only a three-week stay in the new capital he returned to his native city and did not come back until the occasion of the Dante Centenary several months later.

The Florentines did not embrace the idea of Florence as capital either.<sup>25</sup> They were not enthused with the concept of serving as host to the multitude of Piedmontese officials moving to the city.<sup>26</sup> In fact, the Florentines referred to the Piedmontese as the "new barbarians" who, with their arrival, were about to spoil the "perfection, equilibrium, and traditions" of Florence. Florentine editorial houses published numerous pamphlets addressing the disturbing issue of "the newcomers"<sup>27</sup> The attitude of these writings could at best be described as ambivalent and apprehensive. A satirical Tuscan caricature portrays a Piedmontese minister on an ass, with the caption "here are the Piedmontese who bring civilization."<sup>28</sup>

*La Nazione*, the official organ of the Florentine elite, was wary of the widespread Florentine displeasure that stemmed from the arrival of the Piedmontese. It therefore encouraged reconciliation. In an article entitled “Fiorentini, bisogna cambiare, ora che siamo la capitale,” the newspaper held that the transfer of the capital was a challenge that Florentines needed to meet rather than eschew. The “violence to our tranquil customs” was viewed as a necessary step toward civil progress.<sup>29</sup>

In private, however, the elite expressed much trepidation. Bettino Ricasoli considered the transformation of Florence into a provisional capital a “disgrace for Florence, and nothing more” (“disgrazia per Firenze: e nulla più”<sup>30</sup>). Gino Capponi lamented: “Florence, about to become the capital, is like a young girl who, without passion, is about to leave her virginal state... Little Florence (Firenzina), as capital, surpasses all my understanding.”<sup>31</sup> Ubaldino Peruzzi, the ex-minister of the interior, suggested that Florence’s provisional status as capital was like a poison permeating the social order of the city. Salvagnoli and Lambruschini observed that the only advantage offered by the “thankless task” (“ingrato compito”) of serving as capital was that the transfer to Florence would serve to put an end to a Piedmontese hegemony that had always intended to tyrannize Italy under the pretext of unifying it.<sup>32</sup>

These expressions reveal the dual orientation of the Tuscan elite, best understood from within the socioeconomic context of Florence during the period. On the one hand, this faction jealously protected its long-standing socioeconomic and political leadership role in Florence. As traditional landed patricians,<sup>33</sup> these people exercised their local power through the logic of family solidarity or “patronage.”<sup>34</sup> In other words, the men’s social and political center remained Florence even as their interests, as landowners, were tightly bound to the surrounding countryside. For centuries, this group had enjoyed in Florence control over all economic, administrative, social, cultural, and academic institutions.<sup>35</sup>

The relationship of this elite to the rest of the Florentine population has been defined as “social paternalism.”<sup>36</sup> The elite maintained control over an urban populace that had threatened the hegemony of the Moderates in 1848 and that continued to represent a source of potential opposition. This public consisted of people who provided services for the wealthy elite in the city: artisans,

small shopkeepers, and a great number of domestics and servants who performed the upkeep of the Palazzi.<sup>37</sup>

In addition to these middling sorts, there existed in Florence, a poor majority. Florence suffered from endemic poverty before and for the decades after unification. Until 1911, almost half of the families in the commune of Florence requested public assistance. One-fifth were classified as destitute or as *miserabili*.<sup>38</sup>

Nonetheless, the Florentine elite had maintained a tenuous yet long-standing hegemony over the city and its population. It feared that the transfer of the capital, along with the new Piedmontese presence, would undermine its local sociopolitical power by disturbing what Peruzzi (amongst many of his peers, we may recall) considered the traditional and familiar “social order of the city.”

On the other hand, the Florentine elite also viewed the transfer of the nation’s capital to Florence as an opportunity to undermine Piedmontese hegemony and to extend their own influence nationally. Tuscans had already gained considerable national recognition and political status by successfully espousing the Moderate nationalist platform in 1859.<sup>39</sup> Economically, they had presented themselves as viable actors on the national scene by expanding their commercial activities to banking and construction speculation.<sup>40</sup> Now with the capital in Florence, the elite could position itself as the leader of all anti-Piedmontese movements, above all those of other local elite.

It was within this context of power struggles among the various components of the historical Right, and especially between the Tuscan *Consorti* and the Piedmontese *Permanente*, that the preparations for the Dante Centenary were undertaken.<sup>41</sup> At stake was the status of Florence, as well as of the Tuscan elite, within national politics. In the words of contemporary diarist Ugo Pesci,

That occasion lent itself better than any other to a solemn manifestation of the national spirit, and to presenting, so to speak, the new capital to the most notable citizens of the other Italian cities.<sup>42</sup>

## The Florentine Cultural Project

The Dante Centenary, however, needs also to be studied in another context, that of the complex politicocultural endeavor

that progressed throughout the eighteenth century: the construction of the myth of Florence as the “Athens of the new Italy.”<sup>43</sup> The promotion and elevation of Florentine cultural institutions—the restoration and renovation of museums, galleries, libraries, and academies, as well as the flourishing of Florentine editorial houses—formed a key component of this project.<sup>44</sup>

In the years following unification, the advance of Florentine cultural institutions took place in the context of the city’s contentious dealings with Piedmontese cultural policies. The latter were analogous to the Piedmontese approach to reform at the level of political administration. Whether dealing with the organization of historical research, the reform of the university system, or the management and conservation of an historical and artistic heritage (*i beni artistici*), the Piedmontese government’s orientation was interchangeably filo-Savoyard and centrist. Piedmont demonstrated little respect for the inclusion or preservation of other local traditions and institutions.

Ilaria Porciani’s classic study of the state’s organization of historical research, especially its focus upon the disputes between the Turinese and Florentine historical institutions, outlines the importance of these matters.<sup>45</sup> Porciani argues that the Turinese Deputazione di Storia Patria remained exclusively Piedmontese and closely connected to government institutions, maintaining a tight monopoly on the resources and control of historical research in Italy. It did not serve as a reference point for, nor did it solicit or include contributions from historians of other regions.<sup>46</sup>

As a direct response to this exclusionary, restrictive, filo-Savoyard Turinese Deputazione, other regions founded their own historical societies. Their mandate was to investigate local traditions and histories.<sup>47</sup> The Florentine *Archivio Storico Italiano*, perhaps the most crucial of these societies, thus worked to establish Florence as the pivotal forum of cultural and intellectual debate on a national level. The *Archivio* would thereby head Italy’s renewal or, in the words of Cosimo Ridolfi, place Florence “at the head of the renewal of Italy” (“alla testa del rinnovamenti d’Italia”).<sup>48</sup>

In contrast to the Turinese Deputazione, the *Archivio* solicited historians and research from different Italian cities. Whereas Turin strove to generate and maintain its cultural prestige by turning inward, Florence reached outward in order to accomplish a

similar task—not only in the name of Florence but, it would seem, of Italy as a whole. Porciani asserts that the work of the “Archivio” continued the politicocultural project of those who gathered in Florence around Viessesu in the 1820s and 1830s. In the following decades, when the Liberal movement was gravitating toward Turin, the “Archivio” preserved Tuscany as a vital center in Italy for historical studies, and for politics and culture.<sup>49</sup>

A debate concerning the state’s project of university reform further highlights the Turinese-Florentine conflict.<sup>50</sup> The Piedmontese proposed to streamline the existent system, which consisted of nineteen independent and heterogeneous universities and six institutions of higher learning that Italy had inherited from the preunification states.<sup>51</sup> According to the plan, the state would consolidate this educational system into four central universities, effectively abolishing the others.<sup>52</sup>

Naturally, the Italian regional elites contested this arrangement.<sup>53</sup> The debate over the university system constituted a persistent “area of conflict”<sup>54</sup> between the Piedmontese centralizing plans and the local entities. Italian universities had long lived in a symbiosis with their host cities. These institutions represented both the prestige and distinct identities of the urban sites.<sup>55</sup>

Porciani’s study shows that throughout the 1860s Tuscans resisted not only the Piedmontese ideas concerning the structure of the university, but the very educational model and curriculum that the Piedmontese advocated. The Tuscan educational model differed fundamentally from that of Piedmont: it was more “spontaneous” and less “rigid.” The Tuscan course of studies, in addition, was longer, more diverse, and more complex. In general, the Piedmontese methods and institutions were perceived as too “schematic.” These differences were part of the grounds for the growing Tuscan opposition to the Piedmontese cultural institutions brought from Turin.<sup>56</sup> In effect the Tuscan refusal to accept the Piedmontese blueprint for university and curriculum reform translated into a fight to maintain the life of the Tuscan pedagogical ideals and educational culture.<sup>57</sup>

A third area of contention between Turin and Florence concerned the preservation of artistic and historical artifacts. The Reform Laws of 1865 did not address the administration of this heritage directly.<sup>58</sup> The matter was, instead, invoked indirectly



under the rubric of the laws concerning the suppression of religious orders. These edicts sanctioned the expropriation of monasteries and convents, the takeover of the buildings for governmental use, and the placement of the goods contained in these structures into the hands of provincial councils. Thus, the religious orders, which for centuries had played a custodial role on behalf of the arts, no longer could do so. One Florentine philologist and cultural historian, lamenting the state's transference of artwork into various museums, galleries, and libraries of the provinces, spoke of the shift as follows:

...in Florence, convents and monasteries are art galleries. And I do not mean galleries in the usual sense of the word. That term normally refers to rooms or warehouses more or less decorated, where a quantity of statues and paintings are accumulated, after having been moved from their original location, from the air, and from the background that gave them meaning, in order to place them according to the capacity of the walls and to the possibilities afforded by the lighting. Instead, I mean that in Florence the monasteries are galleries of works of art, still preserved in the original place where art created them, sheltered and hatched under the wings of religion... Making an inventory? But this will only record for posterity what we would lose!<sup>59</sup>

The repercussions of expropriation of religious properties were experienced more immediately and harshly in Florence than in any other city.<sup>60</sup> With the transfer of the capital, the Piedmontese prerogative of housing governmental offices in convents and ecclesiastical buildings placed the Florentine concern for local artifacts and monuments in a subordinate position. Even more disturbing to the Florentines, Quinto Sella, the Piedmontese minister of finance, assigned three Piedmontese experts—the architect Conte Ceppi, the civil and military engineer Colonello Castellazzi, and the engineer Falconieri—to organize the logistics of the transfer. These experts were sent to Florence in order to determine which Florentine monasteries and convents were most suitable for a speedy takeover by the national offices. Individual Tuscan senators such as Ginori, Storzzi, Della Gherardesca, Caponi, and Ridolfi responded immediately. They argued that the governmental occupancy placed valuable artwork at a severe risk.

*La Nazione* frequently criticized the methods of the Piedmontese specialists. As a further response, the Florentine municipal administration petitioned the Commissione Conservatrice delle Belle Arti, requesting that it supervise the Turinese technical experts.<sup>61</sup> The tendencies of the two commissions often clashed in a climate of rising unease. The Tuscan Commission defended an artistic tradition that, in its view, the Piedmontese were about to “vandalize.” A May 9, 1865, caricature in the satirical journal *Lampione* wonderfully portrays these tensions, albeit from the standpoint of the Tuscans. The caricature depicts the “muratore toscano,” Giuseppe Bianchi,<sup>62</sup> challenging a “bove Falconieri,” a “horned Falconieri” (Falconieri, we recall, was the Piedmontese engineer responsible for “adapting” Palazzo Vecchio so that it would best function for the affairs of Parliament). The caption reads:

Giuseppe Bianchi, the Tuscan painter refuses to allow Falconieri-the-Ox to bring down the ceiling of the hall of Cosimo I, but the aforementioned Ox carries on as much vandalism as his followers.... Long live the artistic Commission....<sup>63</sup>

These cultural confrontations between Florence and Turin appertain to a still larger conflict: the debates concerning the configuration of the emerging national culture. This struggle over the definition of Italian culture reminds us of the German process of *Kulturkampf*, discussed by Helmut Smith in *German Nationalism*.<sup>64</sup> The German government strove to create a homogeneous, Protestant, unified national culture. According to Smith, these policies proved divisive and unsuccessful. They paradoxically reinforced antagonistic cultural practices, inducing memories of a divided people within a politically unified state. Old animosities—in the German case, between Catholics and Protestants—were recollected and politicized, used as tools for the distinct efforts to delimit the national identity.

The project for nationalizing Dante may be viewed similarly. It indexes the Florentine initiative to (1) mark out a distinct Tuscan identity and (2) position that identity at the head of Italian national culture. The Florentines distinguished between a national identity drawn from a Florentine artistic heritage and one forged by its antithesis, the Piedmontese bureaucracy (“La burocrazia è antitesi

dell'arte").<sup>65</sup> It posited the difference as between Florence as eternal museum and "emporio artistico,"<sup>66</sup> and Turin as the quintessential "modern" city:

To look for monuments of art [In Turin], erected to immortalize the deeds of ancient heroes, would be useless... Everything in it is modern, or can at least refer to virtues and glories that are modern, so that the living generation can, so to speak, look at a mirrored reflection of itself.<sup>67</sup>

Florentines held that unification would best be characterized as the product of a *longue durée* of cultural nationalism, opposing this vision to the more modern and more recent territorial nationalism of Piedmont. The commemoration of Italian unity, therefore, should reinforce the first position (unification as the result of a lengthy cultural process) rather than bolster the second (unification as modern phenomenon). Herein lies the root of the rationale behind the Tuscan attempt to situate the birthday of the Florentine Dante in place of the Piedmontese Festa dello Statuto as the official festa of Italy, an issue that we shall now discuss.

## Competing Definitions of National Identity: Festa dello Statuto and Dante Centenary

The Florentine municipality's 1863 decision to celebrate the sixth hundredth birthday of Alighieri in 1865 included a statement that carved out a special role for Florence among the "family" of Italian cities. Florence was to serve as the cradle of a simultaneously Christian, modern, and Italian culture:

Since Dante Alighieri, the greatest poet of the Christian era and of modern civilization, was a Florentine; and since the first sign of civilization is to honor the memory of those men who dedicated their geniuses and their lives to bear witness to the truth and to serve the country...; and since the city of Florence was rich with noble gifts even when the country was experiencing the worst misfortunes, then honoring its greatest Poet is the best way to prove that Florence did not fail to fulfil its task in the Italian family, as well as the best way to show the world that with Dante all of the seeds of Civilization (...) were made fertile.<sup>68</sup>

A year later, in February 1864, an appointed commission in charge of the preparation for the event discussed whether it should ask Parliament to declare the Dante Centenary a “national solemnity” (*Solennità nazionale*), one that would symbolize a “new plebiscite.”<sup>69</sup>

The Parliament never approved the petition. Moreover, the attitude of the king, Parliament, and Piedmontese institutions toward the Centenary project remained at best noncommittal. Only the efforts—above all journalistic ones—of the Florentine municipality and its appointed Centenary Commission were able to construct the occasion as a “national festa,” albeit a *de facto* one.

It is not difficult to divine why the Florentine proposal was so controversial. Italy already celebrated a national festa, the “Festa dello Statuto.” This was an obligatory, official event, established by force of parliamentary law, celebrated each year throughout Italy on the first Sunday of June.<sup>70</sup> The festa honored the 1847 national constitution of Carlo Alberto and was proclaimed the national festival of Italy in 1861. The celebration maintained the “continuity” between the kingdom of Sardinia, the Piedmontese monarchy, and the fundamental institutions of the unified Italian state. It revered the austere militaristic tradition of the Piedmontese elite.<sup>71</sup> To suggest that Italy might replace the Festa dello Statuto with Dante’s birthday as the national festival meant to claim a different ground for Italian national identity. This point was made explicit in an article in the *Giornale del Centenario*, the key mouthpiece of the Florentine Centenary:

The Parliament should declare that, from 1865 on, the anniversary of the Constitution, rather than being celebrated on the first Sunday of June, be celebrated on 21 May, and then explain the reason behind this apparently minimal change.<sup>72</sup>

What was characteristic of the history of the Italian nation, the article further argued, was not the previous fifteen years of political history, but the last six hundred years of intellectual and cultural achievement. To erase this six-century period of cultural heritage from the memories that would be perpetuated by a national festa such as the Festa dello Statuto would be to delete those centuries from Italy’s proud history.<sup>73</sup>

Here, and for the first time, the *Giornale* expressed the pivotal goals of the Centenary: (1) to distinguish between the Tuscan and Piedmontese contributions to unification; and (2) to position the Tuscans as the cultural leaders of the new nation-state.

Four days after the 1864 Festa dello Statuto, *La Festa di Dante*, a second Centenary journal and one addressing a popular readership, further promulgated the above arguments. A lengthy piece entitled “Dante e la festa nazionale” begins by explaining the importance of Dante for any Italian national celebration:

Here are two names [Dante and *festa nazionale*] which seem made to be placed side by side, and which undoubtedly fit well together. Of course, not everybody will agree with this, because one of the many bad habits that exist in the world is the despicable one of ingratitude, so much so that if we don't remember a favor we received yesterday, certainly we won't remember one that we received six hundred years ago. But here we are dealing with Dante, and one should not forget what we owe him. But you will ask me: what does this have to do with a national festa? It does, I'll say it and I will prove it.... So, why do we celebrate an Italian national festa? It is obvious: we celebrate it in order to remember all the good we have done or received in this world, to be grateful towards those who were good to us, and to persevere in making progress and in trying to do good again.... But among [our] memories, we have that of Dante, which is the first of them, not only as far as the date, but also for its importance. Was he not the first one to see where the trouble was and to raise his voice to heal us from our evils? Was he not the first and greatest of our exiles? Was it not because of Italy's suffering that he left the world before his time and that he bequeathed the nation with the glorious heritage of the *Divine Comedy*? Dante and Italy are one and the same, because he was for her everything, and she gained everything from him, and today she does all she can to draw more and more inspiration from his teachings. Therefore, the national festa which we are celebrating is also the festa of Dante. *Actually, it would be a good idea if, from now on, and starting next year, the Festa della Statuto be moved to match the day of Dante's birth, and be kept as such in the future. Because whether one agrees or not, he was the driving force behind the unification of Italy; and if during the national feste we remember and honor the memory of our great Benefactors, I dare you to find one who deserves this worthy name as much as Dante Alighieri.*<sup>74</sup>

Neither these lengthy arguments, nor the fact that by May 1865 an overwhelming 1,200 municipalities and associations had registered to participate in the Centenary, served to convince Parliament. On May 7, 1865, a week before the Centenary, *La Festa di Dante* expressed its regret regarding Parliament's refusal to recognize a new national festa: "still, the moral effect of an action from Parliament would have been extremely important, proving to the world that the Festa di Dante celebrates Italy's unity."<sup>75</sup>

The Tuscan organizers' attitude toward parliamentary intervention proved ambivalent. They considered the intervention desirable but not indispensable. Parliament's reticence, in fact, enabled the Tuscan elite to assume the complete direction of the festa. The Dante Centenary did not gain an official endorsement, yet due to this very truth it was also freed from the limitations that such an endorsement would have imposed, and, indeed, had imposed on the Festa dello Statuto.

The Centenary organizers understood how a festa created in a relatively arbitrary manner (through state legislation) differed from one with organic roots, that is, one that appealed to public opinion and wants.<sup>76</sup> The two types of construction reflected two contemporary intellectual discourses on festival planning. The first, a positivist expression, called for a careful engineering of festivals so as to inculcate unified and unifying moral values to a divided, mostly illiterate people. Critical of frivolous and rowdy activities during traditional celebrations—jousts on water, simulated stage fights, dances, and fireworks—this discourse held that national festivals should not be confused with merrymaking, but should provide patriotic education.<sup>77</sup> The second expression, inspired and led by the French historian Jules Michelet, articulated a Romantic ideal of liberty, of "spontaneity in any new holidays that would emerge without anyone's instituting fêtes."<sup>78</sup>

Comparing the Republican festivals of 1847–1848 with the monarchic Festa dello Statuto, Porciani indicates the shift "from demonstrations in the piazza to the temperate festa,"<sup>79</sup> roughly corresponding to the two models above. The "communal" feste of 1847–1848 were occasions for explosive and uncontrolled delight. Without the strong presence of social hierarchy, hence of discipline, such feste occasioned the autocelebrations of the community.

The situation changed with the *Festa dello Statuto*. Moderate leaders of the new government were not interested in communal enthusiasm, but in the “construction of the fundamental institutions of the state” as well as in representing and displaying the authority and power of the state’s elite.<sup>80</sup> Within this state/people polarity, the festa unequivocally celebrated state institutions, specifically the monarchy. The patriotic “nation” celebrated in this *Festa della Nazione* was therefore highly stratified and masculine. It was essentially comprised of an elite group of state institutions: military, administrative, and Parliamentary. And herein rests the most important characteristic and largest limitation of the *Festa dello Statuto*: the absence of popular, organic support.

While the Dante Centenary should not be portrayed as a “spontaneous” and “communal” festa (we will see why in subsequent chapters), its character differed fundamentally from the one studied by Porciani. In their very first meeting, the Centenary organizers decided that the best manner in which to pursue the work of nationalizing a Dante festival was through the development of “public opinion.”<sup>81</sup> This preference reflected the organizers’ concern that the Festa be viewed as “born spontaneously from the will of the people,”<sup>82</sup> and not as imposed from above. They therefore conceived and organized the event so that its protagonists would be the institutions of civil society, that is, the “representatives of the nation” who enthusiastically claimed and insisted on their “right” to participate in the affair.

The independence from Parliament served the Dante Centenary in still another fashion. It relieved the event of any perceived Piedmontese association. The *Festa dello Statuto* has been cast as part and parcel of the “Piedmontization” of the peninsula. The festa required the particular mediation and sponsorship of both the Savoyard monarchy and military institutions. As such, it was met with local resistance.<sup>83</sup> The Dante Centenary, conceived by private citizens and then organized and financed at the municipal level, offered greater attraction to these localities.

Of course, the Dante Centenary also required mediation. Yet its key “mediator,” in the end, was Dante himself, a figure who proved to be enormously flexible and inclusive. Dante was at once celebrated as a Florentine, as profoundly Italian, and as a universal

genius. The Centenary provided the new Italians with an alternative legitimate means to celebrate patriotism without succumbing to the “colonizing” Piedmontese.

Indeed, no understanding of the Dante Centenary would be complete without a brief analysis of the “Dante” that emerged in nineteenth-century Italy. Carlo Dionisotti argues that prior to the final decade of the eighteenth century, the study of Dante occupied a marginal position in comparison to that of the other figures within the Italian canon: Petrarch, Ariosto, and Tasso. During the period of the French Revolution, however, Dante’s fate changed. As evidenced by the numerous editions of *The Divine Comedy* that appeared during the period, Dante began to supersede his companions. He emerged within the Italian literary tradition not as a “remote and venerable ancestor, but as a living and present master of the new poetry and literature.”<sup>84</sup> Dionisotti writes:

In other words, Dante was not, in those circumstances, the poet of one single faction, of revolutionary or reactionary ideology. Rather, in those circumstances in which the living conditions and the hopes of survival of the people everywhere had changed, he was the poet who provided the words and the tones of an unusual, harsh, vehement eloquence, as seemed (and in fact was) required by the extraordinary situation and by the new tasks that literature had to undertake.<sup>85</sup>

Dionisotti also suggests that Dante’s rise to the status of national poet cannot be attributed solely to the brilliance of his verse. An understanding of the phenomenon is better attained through an analysis of Dante criticism, elegies, and publicity that circulated with ever-increasing frequency during the French Revolutionary and post-Napoleonic era.<sup>86</sup>

While the quality of Italian scholarship on Dante did not match up to its British, French, and German counterparts, the latter studies examined Italian medieval history with a seriousness and historical intelligence largely lacking in the Italians. Dionisotti contends that this Italian research, nonetheless, merits careful consideration. It reflects the logic of a certain Italian engagement with Dante, one shaped by three aims.



The first was the mythical construction, within the Italian political space, of a poet-hero, of a figure who would inspire men in their struggles for Italian independence and unification. The second goal, linked to the first, was to “contain” within one persona a series of wild, internal, political quarrels. In Dante, fabricated as mythical idol, competing political factions would find their spokesperson:

...during this overwhelming ignorance and coarseness, he contributed powerfully to repress and restrain the factious spirit of the Italians, and to keep it within the limits of the political struggle. It is remarkable that no new literary and ideological differences, which had manifested themselves so violently in the first decades of the century, formed during the middle decades until the establishment of the Kingdom of Italy. Those differences were still present and influential in regional and municipal commentaries, but both purists and anti-purists, classicists and romantics, Christians and atheists, reactionaries and liberals, neo-Guelphs and neo-Ghibellines, miraculously came together and reconciled their differences in the cult of Dante.<sup>87</sup>

The third intent of Italian Dante scholarship, Dionisotti argues, was to recast the image of Dante according to a European framework, “reform(ing) the national cult of Dante in the terms of the cult attributed to him within Europe” (“di riformare il culto nazionale di Dante nei termini propri del culto che gli veniva tributato in Europa”).<sup>88</sup>

A discussion of Dante’s place within general European letters lies outside the scope of the present study. Nonetheless, it is important to characterize further this “Dante” that, within Dionisotti’s outlook, Italians assimilated into a national cult. In the more recent work *Dante and the Victorians*, Alison Burbank contends that Seymore Kirkup’s rediscovery (in 1840) of what he wrongly believed to a portrait of Dante by Giotto in the Bargello was central to the formation of the Victorian cult of Dante.<sup>89</sup> Traditionally, Dante had been viewed as an “ageing prophet” of “gloomy severity.”<sup>90</sup> Victorians, to the contrary, embraced Kirkup’s young and active Dante, a more fitting representation of their enthusiasm for the Italian national cause. In fact, individuals

interpreted Kirkup's "finding" as the recovery of the "lost culture of Austrian-dominated Italy," a recovery aided by "free and chivalrous England."<sup>91</sup>

For the Victorians, the revival of Dante was not a mere means to affirm their own self-importance.<sup>92</sup> The Victorians linked the revival of Dante and Italy with the rebirth of culture throughout Europe. English writers such as George Eliot emphasized the importance of an artistic tradition for nation-building and national consciousness. The nation's right to exist owed itself to past cultural achievements.<sup>93</sup>

While a catalyst for cultural renewal, Dante was also cast in a more historically and politically specific manner: the Victorian Dante was a political Liberal. Writers such as Sismonde de Sismondi embraced Dante because of the poet's resistance to both the temporal power of the pope and to the French interference within Italian politics. Such interpretations of Dante's life enjoyed favor within liberal francophobic circles emerging in the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars.<sup>94</sup>

The "Dante" that the Moderate Tuscan elite would depict in 1865 was not only the founder of modern European civilization, the father of Italian nationality, and a political Liberal—with a few exceptions,<sup>95</sup> all of which were in line with the Victorian assimilation of the poet—but he was also unequivocally presented as the Florentine visionary of the unification of Italy under the Victor Emmanuel monarchy.<sup>96</sup>

This latter attribution was pivotal to the Centenary project. Indeed, in understanding Dante in this manner the Centenary organizers would provide—also learn—a lesson that the Victorians possibly did not imagine. We have begun to see in this chapter that the legitimization of a nineteenth-century local site, Florence, as new capital depended on a national movement: the nationalization of Dante, and the extension of Florence itself, through the channels of civil society. Perhaps less obvious is the fact that this deployment of Dante for the cause of national unification depended on the poet's promotion at a local level. By 1865, Dante could only become a national figure if the various localities, and by extension the people via civil society, identified themselves in this figure. No national purpose, no casting of Dante as hero of unification, would

flourish without an appeal to a locality (or several localities). Such a local site, because it clashed with the former center and with the central government, could stand for both decentralization and the popular sector, and could therefore summon the people, gaining the consensus that the impositions of a central government could not by themselves effect. And the key Italian locality within this process turned out to be Florence.

## The City Organizes the Nation: The Structures of the Centenary

The organizational development of the national festival of the Dante Centenary took place in the larger context of contemporary debates over the constitutional design of the new nation-state. While the actual creation of Italy as a unitary and monarchical state had rendered moot the alternative federalist plans (à la Cattaneo or Neo-Guelf),<sup>1</sup> after 1861, the constitutional polemic shifted to questions concerning centralization and decentralization.

From 1861 to 1865, the Italian political and intellectual elite discussed which constitutional design was best suited to govern a population as diverse in history and tradition as the “new Italians.”<sup>2</sup> As we have seen, the local elite (especially in the Center-North), linked to the city and traditional paternalistic administrations, contested the centralizing framework of the proposed reforms. Raffaele Romanelli unravels the conflicting tendencies within the Italian Liberal’s attitudes toward these reform laws. He argues that the landowning elite of north and central Italy favored the maintenance of autonomous local administration based on property. This traditional paternalistic base of power soon came to contradict the “modernizing” dynamic emerging from the same Liberal system. Romanelli describes the course of the clash as follows: “The push for reform was joined by requests for enquiry, growing perplexity, and finally, a manifest opposition to the proposed reforms.”<sup>3</sup>

The powerful vestiges of the city-state heritage, which Romanelli elsewhere dubs a “Renaissance paradigm,”<sup>4</sup> ironically lent

themselves to the rationale of both sides of the strife. Advocates of centralization argued that a highly centralized system might expunge centuries-old local loyalties. Only this governmental structure, therefore, could assure the vitality and cohesion of the new nation-state. The proponents of “decentralization,” to the contrary, perceived the need to ground national identity and state authority on more organic communities of interest and opinion. They viewed the commune or the municipality as the fundamental and “natural” unit of governance.<sup>5</sup>

The tension between the two views was further complicated by the fact that the design for “centralization” in Italy was not a neutral one. As indicated, its blueprint, ratified in 1865, involved the extension of Piedmontese laws and institutions (which in turn had been borrowed from France) across the entire Italian peninsula. The local elites negotiated for more local autonomy and power precisely in response to this fact.<sup>6</sup>

Such allegiance to the local, scholars have contended, led to a modern “new particularism.”<sup>7</sup> The elite became political entrepreneurs. Lobbying for “special status,” they defended local interests and privileges within a national Parliament forum.<sup>8</sup>

The Dante Centenary must be viewed, at least in part, in terms of this thesis. Such a relation will reveal that, at its most exalted moment, a festival that celebrated national unity also venerated both a particular local site and the very concept of the local, creating a profound ambiguity.

However, the Centenary should also be analyzed in light of a linked, but distinct, polarity: that between civil society and Parliament. The critics of the Italian government asserted that Parliament, as the “apex of official Italy, was an artificial institution, falsely claiming to represent the nation.”<sup>9</sup> Aware of this perceived gap, the Tuscan organizers of the Dante Festa posited “civil society” as the true representation of the Italian nation. Through the various administrative structures of the Centenary, members of this elite endorsed municipal claims generally, and those of Florence specifically, by creating, mobilizing, and appealing to civic associational networks. These included the fund-raising, educational, artistic, and literary projects that preceded and framed the three-day festival in May 1865.

## I. The Society for the Monument of Dante Alighieri

A chronological account of the Centenary discloses the evolution of distinct private and local initiatives that led to the event. The chronology reveals an organizational model for the Centenary that does not conform to the portrait of associational life (*associazionismo*) of nineteenth-century Italy that has been drawn by historiography. This scholarship depicts an associational life that lacked national ties. Alberto Banti, describing this view, argues that in fact this absence represents the key “peculiarity” of this *associazionismo*. Initiatives began locally, and remained local, “needing no national connections or coordination.”<sup>10</sup>

To be sure, the associations formed to promote Dante and his Centenary did begin within a local orbit. But they were eventually transformed and extended to include a national membership. The group formed to advance the idea of a monument to Dante in Florence provides an example of this shift.

A cenotaph in Florence honoring Dante was first conceived in 1802–1804. It was inaugurated only in 1830, at the church of Santa Croce.<sup>11</sup> Later, in 1855 (but still prior to unification), several Florentine individuals pursued the idea of building another Dante monument on the basis of a model brought to Florence by the sculptor Enrico Pazzi. The province of Ravenna, having originally commissioned the model, had then rejected it for political reasons.

These Florentines created a committee of twelve Tuscans.<sup>12</sup> Its mission was to promote and fund the transformation of Pazzi’s model into a full-sized marble statue for a major piazza in Florence. In preunification Tuscany, the promotion of Pazzi’s Dante, which was perceived as expressing “indignation against Italy’s condition of oppression and servitude” (“sdegno contro l’oppressione e la servitù d’Italia”<sup>13</sup>), was necessarily local and private. Thus recruitment until 1862, undertaken in private letters, limited itself to a closed circle of culturally and financially powerful Florentine men.

Typical of such letters was one penned in October 1861 by Pagganucci, president of the Società Promotrice, to Atto Vannucci,

who was later to serve as its vice president:

A committee is promoting a subscription to build a colossal statue of the divine poet Dante Alighieri (a work which will be entrusted to the sculptor Pazzi). By unanimous vote of the participants in last Sunday's meeting, the said committee elected, as a promoting member.... Let the work which has already been started be accomplished so that the statue may be erected in one of Florence's public squares; the municipality has already called it a worthy simulacrum of the Homer of modern civilization.<sup>14</sup>

However, beginning in 1862, La Società Promotrice made the determination to enlarge its intimate structure. It extended the reach of its project by embarking on a fund-raising enterprise, one whose goal was to involve all cities of the Italian peninsula. In a letter of April 15, the president of the Società Promotrice wrote to Guglielmo De Cambray Digny, the Gonfaloniere of Florence, inviting his participation in the society. At this point the society was introduced as "a private society of friends and a committee of twelve citizens selected from Tuscany's main cities" ("una Società privata di amici e un Comitato di 12 cittadini scelti nelle principali città di Toscana"<sup>15</sup>). Pagganucci also enclosed in the epistle, a copy of a printed manifesto of the society entitled "Agli Italiani di ogni Provincia" and dated January 1862.<sup>16</sup> The document expressed the intention of the society to enlarge its base. Encouraging all municipalities of Italy to partake in the patriotic project by contributing funds for the statue, the manifesto was published in newspapers throughout the nation:

The work, which was started during a distressing time for our homeland, was first promoted and encouraged almost exclusively by Tuscan citizens. For this reason, now that Italy has been almost completely reunited into one body after so many centuries, the Promoting Committee believes that the great Italian homeland as a whole should be called forth and given the honor to erect the new monument to the greatest of all of her children. Therefore, on behalf of the original Society, the undersigned invite the Municipalities of every province and all Italian brothers to contribute to the monument.<sup>17</sup>

The revised Società Promotrice established a new constitution whose first article addressed the question of membership.<sup>18</sup> Membership was to be divided equally between Tuscans (*soci residenti*) and non-Tuscans (*soci corrispondenti*). The list appearing in the back of the document indicates, in fact, that the constituency consisted of 141 *soci residenti* and 158 *soci corrispondenti*.<sup>19</sup> The enlargement of membership and subscription, however, did not alter the profile of the directorship, which remained exclusively Tuscan. Eight Tuscan men occupied the seats of the *seggio*. Pagganucci served as president, Atto Vannucci as vice president, F. S. Orlanini and Giuseppe Poggi as advisors, Targioni Tozzetti and Carlo Scappucci as secretaries, and Carlo Bologna and Carlo Fenzi as treasurers.<sup>20</sup>

Nonetheless, the voluntary association conceived of itself as a national body transcending the bureaucratic, administrative, and political divisions within the nation-state, whether municipal, provincial, or regional. A dispute over seating arrangements a few years later at the festa itself highlights the issue. For the inauguration ceremony at Santa Croce, the representatives of the society were originally not assigned adjacent seats but were separated according to the provincial affiliation of individual members. The *Provveditore* of the Società, Carlo Bologna, wrote a letter to Cambray Digny complaining that the commission for the Dante Centenary had “forgotten” to assign special seating for the body of the Società Promotrice.<sup>21</sup> Bologna requested a special reserved seating arrangement for the sixty Tuscan and non-Tuscan members. He deemed it necessary that the Società Promotrice appear in this manner so as to “participate, *as one body*, in the solemn procession that inaugurates the Festa” (“prender *parte in corpo* alla solenne processione che inaugura la festa”<sup>22</sup>). In the end, the Società Promotrice did appear as a single body in the procession of May 14.<sup>23</sup>

The organizational blueprint of the Società Promotrice mirrors that of most other institutions of the Centenary, discussed in detail below. The association hardly developed according to Banti’s model. Instead, a private Tuscan initiative expanded its networks and mobilized voluntary support nationally, while it reserved the position of leadership and directorship for Tuscans.



## II. The Florentine Commission for the Centenary of Dante

The national expansion of a private Tuscan initiative served, in fact, as the blueprint for the central organization of the Dante Centenary, the Commissione Fiorentina per il Sesto Centenario di Dante Alighieri. The roots of this commission are varied, and many have laid claim to the original proposal.<sup>24</sup> According to the Dante scholar Pio Rajna, the undisputed authority on the subject, it was the 1858 Schiller Centenary in Germany that provided the impetus for the Italians to similarly honor their own Dante. A provocative article by Gustavo Strafforello published in the Turinese *Rivista Contemporanea* suggested a Centenary in honor of Dante, “a poet who was a thousand times greater than Schiller” (“che fu poeta maggiore le mille volte di Schiller”<sup>25</sup>). While the proposal was publicized in other Italian journals, it came to no real fruition.

The Centenary project was again picked up, in September 1863, by an “obscure Florentine,” Guido Corsini,<sup>26</sup> in an article in the Florentine journal *La Gioventù*. Likely influenced by the proposal of Professor Vitale De Tivoli,<sup>27</sup> Corsini demanded that the Florentine municipality approve of a celebration in Dante’s honor to take place in May 1865:

In an *upcoming public and solemn* assembly, [the Municipality of Florence] should order that in the month of May 1865, Dante’s Centenary be celebrated in Florence in a manner worthy of Italy’s Athens and of the new era.<sup>28</sup>

It is noteworthy that Corsini’s proposal did not make any allusions to previous suggestions concerning the commemoration of Dante, including that of the Società Promotrice. In Rajna’s view, Corsini regarded the work of the Società Promotrice “as a secondary issue [...]. The thought of the solemn event was for him (Corsini) independent of any contamination” (“Come cosa posteriore [...]. Il pensiero della grande Solennità fu dunque in lui (Corsini) indipendente da ogni contaminazione”<sup>29</sup>).

By the following November (1863), the municipality of Florence approved the Centenary celebration to take place in Florence in May 1865. That same decree also approved the formation of a

commission in charge of preparations for the Centenary.<sup>30</sup> A few months later, the municipality authorized the astonishing sum of 350,000 lire for the festival budget. To appreciate this sum, it is useful to compare it with the monies used for other Florentine festivals of that same year. The Centenary budget exceeded that for the 1865 Festa di San Giovanni (20,000 lire) and the Festa dello Statuto's (11,000 lire) by more than ten times. Without any financial aid from Parliament, the Florentine municipality assumed the entire financial responsibility for this national event.

The original Centenary Commission appointed by the Florentine municipality was comprised of ten Florentines other than the presiding Gonfaloniere of Florence. The profile of the commission reflected that of the Florentine municipal government. The ten individuals nominated by the municipality represented a combination of members of the municipal government and of Dante specialists from major Florentine cultural and academic institutions. They were the Gonfaloniere (Giulio Carobbi in 1864 and Cambray Digny in 1865) as president; Gino Capponi, the senator, *Consigliere* of the Florentine municipality, and the director of the Accademia della Crusca, as vice president; the Marchesi Ferdinando Bartolommei, Marchese Cosimo Ridolfi, and Cavaliere Emilio Frullani, priors of the Florentine municipality; Gian Battista Giuliani, holding the Cattedra di Dante at the Istituto di Studi Superiori; Pagganucci, the president of the Società Promotrice; Brunone Bianchi and Pietro Fraticelli of the Accademia della Crusca; and finally, Guido Corsini as the secretary of the commission.<sup>31</sup>

Their mandate was to officially invite other qualified individuals to participate in the commission.<sup>32</sup> During its second meeting of February 12, 1864, the organization nominated individuals from seven social and professional categories. Maintaining the traditional and premodern orders, the social bodies were divided into the *patrizi* or nobility,<sup>33</sup> the *commercianti/capitalisti*,<sup>34</sup> and the *popolani*.<sup>35</sup> The professional categories included the *pittori*,<sup>36</sup> *scultori*,<sup>37</sup> *architetti*,<sup>38</sup> and the *classe della musica*.<sup>39</sup> The expanded Commissione per la Celebrazione del Centenario di Dante is a "who's who" of the Moderate Florentine political elite. Many of the newly recruited members served on the municipal government of Florence as well.<sup>40</sup> Among the representatives of the *popolani* no members from the leadership of the popular classes or worker

societies were included. The exclusion of Giuseppe Dolfi, known as the Florentine “capopopolo,”<sup>41</sup> is noteworthy in this context.

The General Commission met regularly from February 1864 until the moment of the festa. With bimonthly gatherings at the start, the meetings grew more frequent as the event approached. Secretary Guido Corsini not only transcribed the *verbale* (*adunanze*) of each meeting in detail; he also wrote a “secretary’s report” detailing the discussions held during each meeting.<sup>42</sup> He ceased this practice in March 1865, when the immediate task of preparation for the imminent occasion presumably proved too overwhelming.<sup>43</sup>

The commission’s main task consisted in promoting, coordinating, and directing all activities related to the festa preparations. Four separate subcommittees were charged with the conception and execution of the program.<sup>44</sup> An artistic commission tackled the issue of the decoration of the overall city of Florence and especially of the Piazza Santa Croce. A literary commission addressed the epigraphs and coordinated the festa’s relation to the literary academies.<sup>45</sup> A housing commission concerned itself with the arrangement of suitable and free space for the various events, as well as for the distinguished guests. Finally, a commission of finance handled contributions as well as expenses. It also negotiated with worker societies, the theatres, and other sites that would host the festivities.<sup>46</sup>

The Florentine General Commission played a subtle but powerful role in the coordination of educational, fund-raising, and literary activities, ultimately forging and appropriating the symbolic and material networks of the emerging national body politic. The commission, indeed, positioned itself as the administrative and logistical center of the “correspondence” and “exchange” of the festa.

### III. Exchange

The Dante Centenary can be understood as the performance of a series of formal exchanges. These helped shape the emergence of national associative and civic networks, while also affirming Florence’s centrality within these networks. Chronologically, the history of the “exchange” reads as follows: (1) the Gonfaloniere of

Florence publicly invited all the Italian “*corpi morali* that represented the nation” to send representatives to Florence on the occasion of the festa; (2) more than 1200 municipalities and associations from across Italy responded by sending letters of introduction/registration to the commission secretary; (3) once registered, the deputies entered Florence with their respective banners and left these flags with the municipality of Florence following the ceremony in Piazza Santa Croce; (4) the municipality of Florence bestowed a diploma (“*attestato di riconoscenza*”) on all the deputies for their participation; (5) it also conferred commemorative medals on these participants and representatives; (6) after the event, the deputies dispatched “thank-you” letters, which acknowledged reception of the commemorative medallions, and paid homage to Florence as host; and (7) Florence publicized the exchange by converting the donated flags into a permanent exhibition in the museum of San Marco.

The Florentine communal archives retains a set of 1200 numbered letters of this type, addressed to the Centenary Commission from the most varied Italian social, political, and cultural associations.<sup>47</sup> Written in April 1865, they are letters of introduction and registration responding to the abovementioned public call of the Gonfaloniere to all *corpi morali* that “represented the nation.”<sup>48</sup>

Two important points need to be emphasized about the letters. First, the commission treated them as a type of census. In turn, they served as a means of taking an inventory of the representative civic institutions of Italian society. The commission struggled repeatedly to systematize the flow of letters from institutions “representing the nation” into manageable and coherent lists.<sup>49</sup> Eventually, the commission divided the participants into several categories: municipalities, provincial councils, national guards, mutual-aid societies, academies, universities and schools, professional associations, and finally, the press. Counting, categorizing, and documenting the Italian social institutions, the commission lent concreteness to the abstract notion of “the nation.” By rhetorically equating the representatives at the festa to “representatives of the nation,” it also managed to accord a specific legitimacy, derived from the institutions of civil society rather than from Parliament, to the festa. Finally, this categorization process permitted the

commission to emerge as the agent that could legitimately draw a map of a viable and “representative” Italian body politic.<sup>50</sup>

The decision to associate the festa with civic institutions was geared to promote a specific politics. In fact, the organization appropriated the pervasive notion that the Parliament was not truly representative of the Italian nation. This opinion held sway because many believed that Parliament did not respect local diversities. Also, as the embodiment of “official Italy,” Parliament was far removed and disconnected from the people, the “real Italy.”<sup>51</sup> Positing municipal institutions and associations of the civil society as the “representative” body politic, the Centenary summoned, empowered, and in turn, drew legitimacy from a representative body “alternative” to that of Parliament.

The 1200 letters are significant for a second reason. Many local associations gained their way into national networks and achieved national existence for the first time through these correspondences. Society after society, small as well as large, unknown as well as known, introduced themselves to those outside their locality. They also explained in their epistles how and why they could be defined as “corpo morale,” and thus represent the nation.<sup>52</sup> Collectively, these letters attest to the vitality of varied local and grassroots organizations. They also show that these institutions used the occasion of the Centenary to establish themselves as legitimate constituencies within the national political space.

As indicated, in his public call, the Gonfaloniere requested that all municipalities and associations bring their respective “banners” to Florence. The Dante Commission itself put forth the idea of a donation of “flags” to the municipality of Florence, as it choreographed the repertoire of formal exchanges. A total of 375 “bandiere, vessilli, e stendardi” were handed over to the Gonfaloniere following the ceremonies of the first day. They represented 310 municipalities, 4 provinces, 24 universities and schools, 11 scientific, literary, and artistic academies, 14 mutual aid societies, and a few presses, libraries, and national guards.<sup>53</sup> A published list of all parties who donated their flags appears in the document with the unwieldy title of *Elenco delle Bandiere, Vessilli e Stendardi Statali Donati al Municipio di Firenze dalle Rappresentanze delle Varie Provincie Italiane, Accademie, Università, Istituti, Società Operaie che Intervenero alle Solenni Feste del VI Centenario*

*della Nascità del Divino Poeta Dante Alighieri*.<sup>54</sup> In turn, the Florentine municipality handed over formal diplomas, *Attestato di Riconoscenza*, to the deputies both for their participation in the festival and as “the gift they offered as a remembrance of this solemn event” (“pel dono da essa rilasciato a ricordanza della solennità”<sup>55</sup>).

At the conclusion of the festa, Turin, Milan, Genova, Naples, and Palermo each received a gold medallion, while all other participating cities and corporations received bronze ones.<sup>56</sup> At significant expense,<sup>57</sup> the commemorative medals were intended as the expression of the “gratitude” of the city of Florence to all the deputies who had attended the festival. A July 1865 notice of the Municipio di Firenze reads:

...The gratitude of this city towards the deputies who were sent from all over the peninsula could only be expressed by offering to so many illustrious representatives the commemorative medal of the Dante Centenary, a keepsake of a solemn event which, just like the Supreme Poet, will be forever remembered by the Italian people.<sup>58</sup>

As late as September 1865, four months after the event, Florence was still receiving letters of homage and gratitude for hosting the festival, as well as for the medallions.<sup>59</sup> Besides the customary expressions of appreciation, most letters also reflected upon and reaffirmed the meaning of the festa put forth by the Gonfaloniere in his letter accompanying the medallions. They affirmed that the intervention of all the Italian representatives at the Dante Festival was “a new, wonderful sign of the harmony that formed and will form Italy’s well being” (“novella e splendida prova di quella concordia che formò e formerà la salute d’Italia”<sup>60</sup>).

The successful exchange of flags and medallions had come to stand for the “harmony among the Italian people” (“concordia fra gl’Italiani”); the objects themselves actually functioned as sacred national artifacts. In 1866, the secretary of the Dante Commission made a proposal to institutionalize the memory of the exchanges with annual public exhibitions. Every June 21 or on the day of the Festa dello Statuto, a Corsini letter suggested, the donated flags ought to be put on public exhibition in the gallery of the Palazzo

delle Cascine. In this way, he continued, “those municipalities will be shown that their precious keepsakes have not been forgotten by the Florentine people” (“venga data a quei municipi una prova che i loro preziosi ricordi non sono dimenticati dai Fiorentini”<sup>61</sup>). There is no evidence that any such annual exhibitions actually took place. However, an 1869 publication catalogued the permanent exhibition of banners in the Reale Museo di S. Marco.<sup>62</sup>

The exchange of flags and medals does not exhaust the repertoire of sacred national paraphernalia summoned by the Centenary organizers. In one highly publicized and charged instance, Florence failed to obtain that most coveted sacred object for the Centenary, Dante’s ashes from Ravenna. One of the first acts of the Dante Commission and of the Florentine municipality had been to ask the city of Ravenna for the remains, the *ceneri* of Dante.<sup>63</sup> The Florentine municipality argued that the Centenary in Florence would not be complete without the “presence”<sup>64</sup> of Dante. Only the return—“let the Divine Poet return to his lovely San Giovanni” (“far tornare il divino poeta al suo bel San Giovanni”<sup>65</sup>)—of Dante to Florence would end his long, unjust exile, one that had symbolized the historical disunity and discord among the Italian cities. The Florentines also contended that Dante’s “material presence” was critical to the success of the Centenary so that “in 1865 the Italians can come here and reaffirm and swear on the *sacred bones* the unity of the homeland” (“gl’Italiani nel 1865 possono venir qui ad affermare di nuovo e a giurare sulle *sacre ossa* l’unità della patria”<sup>66</sup>).

Ravenna adamantly refused, responding that the very fact of unification rendered the issue of the “perpetuation of (Dante’s) exile” moot.<sup>67</sup> Furthermore, the city of Ravenna, while “wanting to take part in the celebration of Dante’s sixth centenary” (“desiderosa di associarsi alla celebrazione del sesto centenario di Dante”<sup>68</sup>), could not “be properly prepared to honor the memory of that great Italian, abandoning to others those sacred ashes which were and still are so venerated and loved by the citizens of Ravenna” (“appresterebbe in retta guisa ad onorare la memoria del grande Italiano, abbandonando ad altrui quelle sacre ceneri che furono e sono oggetto di tanto culto ed amore dei cittadini ravennati”<sup>69</sup>). Ravenna’s refusal, known as “the great refusal,”<sup>70</sup> deprived not the nation, but rather Florence, of the “sacred ashes.” In fact, Ravenna

itself turned Dante's ashes into the sacred center of a Dante festival a month after the Florentine Centenary.<sup>71</sup>

Florence now attempted to repatriate Dante in a different way, this time more successfully. On the advice of the Dante Commission, the city conferred Florentine citizenship on the direct descendants of Dante, the family of Count Sarego-Alighieri, residents of Verona.<sup>72</sup> The bestowal of Florentine citizenship was intended as an honor and tribute to Dante, as a means to end his "unjust exile" and as part of the larger project of "amends to be made to (Dante's) memory" ("riparazione da doversi fare alla...memoria [di Dante]"<sup>73</sup>).

The granting of this status to the descendants of the Alighieri family constitutes one of the more indicative exchanges of the Centenary. The act seems to run counter to every assertion the Florentine Commission had made about the meaning of the celebration. The directors of the Centenary had gone through a rhetorical tour de force in order to emphasize the national scope and significance of the Dante Festa. The commission had described the festa as the fruition of Dante's vision of a united Italy with no internal divisions. To insist on Florentine citizenship for Dante's descendants, 600 years after his birth, at a time when at least officially no divisions existed—and on the occasion of a *national* festa—could hardly constitute an act of "reparation." To the contrary, it seemed to reinforce these old divisions, or *campanilismo*, from which Dante himself had suffered, at least according to the commission.

Within the context of the developing notion of city and citizenship in the middle of nineteenth-century Italy, the meaning of the act increases in complexity. By 1865, neither the notion of a city nor that of a municipal citizenship corresponded to any Italian juridical reality.<sup>74</sup> Thus the granting of Florentine citizenship carried absolutely no juridical consequence. Legal historian Fabio Rugge is unequivocal about the fact that after Napoleonic era, people in the peninsula could only be considered subjects or citizens of the state, and not of the city; the latter was thinned into a "mere concept of demographic classification."<sup>75</sup> Though Rugge's meticulous study is not specifically about Florence or the Dante Centenary but traces the intricate institutional-legal process of the "abolition of the city" and of municipal citizenship in Italy, it certainly applies to the present discussion.



Throughout the nineteenth century, and markedly during the period of unification, the notion of citizenship was progressively purged of any juridical-institutional connection to local identity. Yet such citizenship retained symbolic value. The only vestige of the notion of citizenship *qua* municipal citizenship is the title of “honorary citizen.”<sup>76</sup> The fact that the very authority to grant honorary municipal citizenship lay in the hands of the central state—it was Victor Emmanuel who signed the certificate and not the office of the municipality—underscored the strictly symbolic nature of this status.<sup>77</sup>

While tracing the progressive juridico-institutional decline of the notion of city and municipal citizenship, Rugge formulates the emergence of a “modern” kind of particularism, that is, localism: a “nuovo particolarismo” that must be differentiated from the traditional divisions into city-states. In fact, the defining characteristic of this new particularism was, above all, the “negotiation” between the local elites and the central government in the interest of municipal privileges:

The local municipalities and their élites are forced to negotiate concessions—and I would almost say citizens’ privileges—with the political center. From this point of view the abolition of the cities doesn’t indicate the end of the local particularism at all, but rather the beginning—or the logical premise—of a new particularism, of a particularism that can be called modern.<sup>78</sup>

The privileges to local sites, demanded or granted via the negotiations, were grounded on the symbolic rather than the juridical, giving birth to new “modern” forms of local identity.

A reading of the symbolic “Florentization” of Dante’s family, when informed by Rugge’s formulation, points to the precise meaning of the gesture. It functioned as a means to retain and affirm the notion of a “Florentine” identity as Florence surrendered juridical status (at least insofar as citizenship was concerned). The exchange of legal status for symbolic worth served to affirm an identity not based on political territory, but achieved through cultural constructs.<sup>79</sup>

The exchanges just described gain compelling significance when put in the immediate context of the debates over centralization and decentralization. The loyalties of the elite were divided

between the “big homeland” (“grande patria”) and “little homeland” (“piccola patria”). The rhetoric and acts of the Florentine municipality reflect this conflict. The municipality and its organs (such as the Centenary Commission) appealed to unitary terms such as *patria*, *nazione*, *Italia*. Yet the actual exchanges, whether between Florence and 310 other Italian municipalities, Florence, and Ravenna, or Florence and the descendants of Dante, insisted upon and underlined a new form of local/municipal prestige and power.

#### IV. Italian Provinces and the Unification of Cultural Material: Esposizione Dantesca

The previous discussion highlights the fact that, by organizing the Centenary nationally, the Florentine municipality in fact worked to sanction municipal claims in general, and Florence’s in particular. The power and prestige that came to be associated with the act of organization induced other sites to involve themselves with the process. The gestures of Ravenna previously discussed, that city’s covetous wish to be “associated” (“associarsi”) with the Dante Centenary, testify to this point. Another administrative body, the Florentine *provincial* council, also laid claim to an association with the festa. It therefore carved out for itself *and other Italian provinces* a special task and role: it proposed a public Dante exhibition on the occasion of the festa. Appointing a Florentine central committee to coordinate the project, this body asserted that provincial councils could best bring together the assortment of Dante artifacts. These had been dispersed throughout the divided Italian communes for centuries:

Considering how it is a duty of the representatives of the province to participate in the solemn tribute that the commune of Florence is about to pay to the memory of Dante...; considering how a public exhibition of everything that might remind people of the Divine Poet..., collected from every part of Italy, can properly unite in this solemn national event the representatives of all Italian provinces.<sup>80</sup>

The exhibition was to take place in the Salone del Cinquecento of the Uffizi. It would be comprised of paintings, statues, incisions, drawings, miniatures, photographs, medals, codices, and

rare editions brought together for the first time from across the peninsula.

The committee expressed the objectives of the Esposizione in a July 25, 1864, letter to the Ministry of Public Instruction. Requesting that the ministry facilitate the transport of Dante objects held at various state libraries and galleries, the correspondent argued that for centuries the “idea of Dante” and the material that referred to him had remained scattered. The divided condition of Italy had not permitted “più intime comunicazioni della comune ricchezza.”<sup>81</sup> The dispersed body of Dante lore should now be united and visible in a unique representation.

The administrative structure of the exhibition took form, the Provincial Council of Florence nominating a central committee in charge of organization. It included Giuseppe Palagi (the secretary of the Prefect of Florence), Augusto Conti, Prince Tommaso Corsini, and Antonio Salvagnoli-Marchetti.<sup>82</sup> The Florentine provincial council called on each of the other fourteen provincial councils from across Italy to nominate a coordinating subcommittee for the gathering of the Dante artifacts located in their respective provinces.<sup>83</sup> The cost of the transport of the objects to Florence would be borne by the individual provincial councils. The objects would be accompanied by a commissioner from each province and would be consigned to the president of the central Florentine Committee.

The Provincial Council of Florence made a similar appeal to the communes within its own province.<sup>84</sup> It announced the enterprise in journals, public notices, and private letters addressed to galleries and individual Dantephiles. From these latter two groups, the committee solicited not only rare manuscripts and objects but also *consiglio*. The petition emphasized this “consultation” as the most needed input. In seeking *consiglio*, the committee actually sought to attract an expert and educated audience, for “there is nothing vainer than a public exhibition. The importance lies in those who see, or rather, in those who look” (“nulla di più vano per se stessa, che una pubblica mostra. L'importante sta in chi vede, o meglio, in chi guarda”<sup>85</sup>). A Dante exhibition needed expert commentary that would bring attention, importance, and meaning to the exhibited objects.

## V. State Competitions, Educational Initiatives, and Voluntary Activities

I have argued that the nationalization of Dante was the work of private initiative that coalesced at the municipal (and to a much lesser degree at the provincial) level. Facing the national government's general noncommitment to the Centenary, an appointed Florentine Centenary Committee conducted a direct national campaign. Important campaigns yet to be discussed were geared not toward cities or provinces, but toward particular institutions of civil society, namely, voluntary fund-raising organizations and the cultural and educational sector.

In fact, soon after its emergence, the commission turned its attention to educational and cultural projects. Two specific proposals were discussed during a meeting of June 21, 1864: a massive literary project ("Biblioteca Dantesca") and a fund-raising endeavor in support of the arts ("Lotteria Dantesca"). Guido Corsini indicated that these two proposals significantly enlarged the breadth that the commission had determined for itself: "...since much larger initiatives are expected of us than the mere establishing of a program for the festa" ("che da noi si aspettano iniziative ben più vaste che non lo stabilire un programma di Feste"<sup>86</sup>).

The first initiative, the "Biblioteca Dantesca," referred to the publication of an accessible national edition of *The Divine Comedy* that was to be disseminated throughout Italy. The edition would appeal to the youth; ideally, the commission believed it would enter every Italian home. The second proposal, put forth by an Italian resident of Germany named Fogolari, consisted of a National Dante Lottery. Fogolari recounted Germany's success in a similar undertaking. An impressive number of German citizens from all classes had enthusiastically donated funds on a voluntary basis to the National Lottery Fund of Schiller. Accordingly, Fogolari suggested that Italians follow the German model.

At its next meeting, in August, the commission approved the lottery proposal, implementing specific measures in order to assure a far-reaching scope. In every provincial capital of Italy, associations would be created to encourage citizen participation

in the work of this “national beneficence” (“beneficenza nazionale”). The associations would sell tickets at three different prices so as to ensure affordability for the various classes.<sup>87</sup> They would then dispatch the funds to a central committee in Florence, to be called “Il Fondo Nazionale di Dante.” The *Fondo*, in turn, would provide grants for artists and writers, promoting the arts in general. An account of the lottery and the donations would then be published.<sup>88</sup>

Assigning the above tasks to Italian municipalities, the commission envisioned a specific role for the national government. It proposed that by the date of the festa, the government institute and inaugurate twelve or fifteen chairs devoted to the study of Dante within the major Italian universities:

But we said in the beginning that the government should take part in the great Centenary festa; here now is our opinion with regards to this. The government should establish twelve or fifteen chairs across the whole of Italy with the purpose of interpreting Dante, and these should be inaugurated on the day selected for the festa. [The government] should also require that the first professors who obtain them create an institute which, with the help of Italy's best minds, should aim to produce two new versions of the Divine Comedy, one scientific and one popular, since the literary one has already been done enough, even too much. And if the government does not consider creating this institute one of its duties, something which we refuse to believe, then the municipalities should make up for it.<sup>89</sup>

As the commission suspected, the national government did not take the initiative to approve such professorships. It was not until the 1880s that the government sanctioned a Dante Chair at the University of Rome.<sup>90</sup>

The national government contributed to the Centenary project in only one case: it sponsored a national literary competition. In an audience with the king on July 20, 1864, Michele Amari, the secretary of public education, proposed a national literary contest based on essays addressing the life and work of Dante for the occasion of the Centenary. After considering the role appropriate for municipalities, academies, literary men, as well as “modest teachers who render popular Dante's life and doctrine,” Amari

had decided that the ministry should intervene more directly in the Centenary endeavor:

I mean to say that a generous competition among the worthiest disciplines, the students of the governmental and free universities of the kingdom, and of other higher institutes would be a nice and proper accomplishment at the Festa of one of the greatest geniuses of modern times.<sup>91</sup>

During a ceremony at the festa, the best essays would receive a gold and a silver medal with an effigy of Dante. The award would be passed on through generations and thus conserve the memory of national glory through households (“casalinga”).<sup>92</sup> A governmental decree endorsed both the literary competition itself and its format.<sup>93</sup> Furthermore, to ensure student and teacher participation in the ceremony, the government closed the state schools across Italy from May 15 to 20.<sup>94</sup>

The national government’s support of the Centenary project nonetheless was limited and circumscribed. This point gains sharper focus via a royal decree issued on March 4, 1865, one month prior to the Centenary. The edict announced new designations for all Italian state schools. Each institution would be renamed after a renowned Italian personage. The *Denominazione dei Regii Licei dello Stato*<sup>95</sup> lists schools in sixty-eight cities of Italy, coupled with corresponding illustrious figures. The decree required that each school assume the name designated in the table.<sup>96</sup> The proclamation also obliged the schools to honor a “solemn commemorative event of Italy’s most renowned writers and thinkers” (“solennità commemorativa degli illustri scrittori e pensatori italiani”) every March, at the end of the school year, during a *Festa Letteraria Annuale*. All students, teachers, and school authorities were to participate.<sup>97</sup>

The law is noteworthy for a number of reasons. The new *denominazione*, as well as the creation of the *Festa Letteraria Annuale*, constituted an important moment in the recently established state schools.<sup>98</sup> The schools were to assume the names of illustrious men, who were indigenous to their locality, except in the cases where a member of the Savoyard Dynasty was designated. Thus Cavour and Gioberti were chosen for two schools in Turin; several

schools in major cities of the south, including Palermo and Naples, were required to take on the name of either Victor Emmanuel or his father, Prince Umberto. By contrast, Dante appears only once on the list, coupled with the city or *liceo* of Florence.

The March decree allows us to expand upon the significance of Parliament's refusal to declare the Centenary a national festa. The mandate reflects a resistance to Florence as the hegemonic cultural center of the nation and to the Florentine Dante as the national poet above and beyond all other Italian literary figures. The law drew cultural charisma and power away from Dante and Florence and toward the Savoyan Dynasty.

Yet, if the commission and the Florentine elite were unsuccessful in gaining the full support of the national government, they were tremendously adept at mobilizing Italian society at large. Initiatives such as the Lotteria Dantesca not only accomplished their intended purpose, namely, the establishment of a national voluntary association in the name of Dante, they also managed to establish a model for other similar independent fund-raising and educational projects across Italy. In fact, during the year before the Centenary such voluntary undertakings in support of the Centenary were numerous and applauded by the Centenary Commission as patriotic acts.

Examples of such voluntary fund-raising initiatives undertaken by theatrical, educational, and ad hoc cultural groups reveal the pervasive grassroots enthusiasm for Dante and his Centenary. In the Teatro Metastasio of nearby Prato, theatrical performances were conducted for young students of the Liceo Cicognini so as to raise funds for the Dante monument.<sup>99</sup> A group of youths in Val di Nievole created a Società Filopatridi in order to raise funds for the Florentine Dante project. The periodical *La Festa di Dante* applauded these *bravi giovani* for their initiative and encouraged others to follow: "This patriotic act needs no encomium. Let the readers remember the example of the Florentine youths we have already mentioned, and let them imitate them, if they so desire" ("Quest'atto patriottico non ha bisogno di encomio. Ricordino i lettori l'esempio dei giovanetti Fiorentini da noi già annunziato e questo, e chi più lo vuole lo imiti"<sup>100</sup>).

The students of the Liceo Ginnasiale in distant Ancona raised 50 lire, which was passed to the Florentine Commission, also in

support of the Dante statue. The director of the school intended to “add the Liceo Anconetano to the names of all the others that are participating in honoring Dante” (“aggiungere il Liceo Anconetano al nome di tutti gli altri che prendono parte agli onori di Dante....”<sup>101</sup>) A private enterprise of the citizens of Trent raised 472 lire in a “Concorso dei Trentini agli onori di Dante”; this too was donated to Florence on behalf of the monument. Indeed, the city of Trent itself offered 500 lire.<sup>102</sup>

La Società dei Fidenti in Florence organized a theatrical performance that raised 300 lire.<sup>103</sup> La Società Filodrammatica of Montevarchi performed a recital in the Teatro Vecchi that garnered 80 lire. Referring to these contributions, the *Giornale del Centenario* reported that “hopefully, this good example will awaken the zeal of the Societies and also of the Dramatic Companies, as well as that of the theater enterprises in order to compete with the municipality for the greatest generosity, which could not possibly be used for a better purpose” (“È desiderabile che questo bell’esempio desti lo zelo delle Società ed anche delle Compagnie drammatiche, come pure delle Imprese teatrali per gareggiare col municipio in generosità, quale non può certo essere impiegata per uno scopo migliore”<sup>104</sup>). Other charitable societies requested permission to use the occasion of the Centenary to raise funds for their own society. La Società degli Asili Infantili, for example, petitioned to hold a public lottery to benefit orphans.<sup>105</sup>

Municipalities and private groups compensated for the national government’s reserve in still other ways. These included educational undertakings such as the establishment, by municipalities, of Dante professorships within the universities, as well as local projects in schools. Palermo announced its first Alighieri Chair, contradicting the spirit of Parliament’s refusal (discussed above) to endorse such initiatives. Other cities of Sicily proposed private “scuole dantesche” directed at “popular instruction,” apparently as a response to the governmental edict concerning the renaming of public schools: “if all of the municipalities thought of that, Italy would go straight to the glorious port!” (“così tutti il Municipi vi pensassero! l’Italia andrebbe diritta al glorioso porto!”<sup>106</sup>). Still other cities took smaller measures. Tolentino in the Marches composed a Dante primer, which was made available to students for consultation during vacation days. The *Giornale del Centenario*



applauded this project as a durable and dignified way of supporting the Dante Festa.<sup>107</sup>

## VI. Literary Productions

In the realm of publications the success of the Dante Centenary was stunning.<sup>108</sup> The production and supervision of literary activities was a major priority for the Centenary Commission. In fact, a subcommittee was assigned to manage and supervise this particular task.

The most remarkable aspect of publications written in honor of the Centenary was not their quality, impressive as that was.<sup>109</sup> Truly astounding was the unprecedented quantity and breadth of such texts. As Dionisotti observes, "it is hard to believe that Italy, whose university and scholastic system had been reestablished *ex novo* only a few years earlier and was still undergoing an experimental phase, was able to produce such a printed monument."<sup>110</sup>

Beyond the massive number of publications, one should emphasize the *direction* of the production as well as the channels of distribution of a kind of "Dante industry." Literary activities popularized Dante and his cult throughout Italy. Not only did elite writings, endorsed by municipal governments or elite institutions, contribute to this phenomenon, there also existed a striking response by the general populace. The literary productions that emerged around the Dante Centenary were not purely academic. With the Dante Centenary, an exceptional and rare moment in Italian history comes into view, one in which the poetic homage paid to a literary figure became part of popular practices.

One of the first acts of the General Commission of the Centenary was to request that the Florentine municipality patronize Cellini and Ghivizzani's publication of an edition of works dedicated to Dante by the most prominent living scholars.<sup>111</sup> The text, *Dante e il suo secolo*, consisted of two volumes of more than one thousand pages.<sup>112</sup> Published in 1865 under the auspices of the city government, it had been conceived as a durable testament to the Centenary celebrations. An 1864 manifesto explained the unified nature of the collection, which gathered the essays of figures

of diverse ideologies. For example, the contributors included the Republican Guerrazzi and the still-Democratic Carducci:

Before Him (Dante) there are neither factions nor separations; there is nothing but Italy, which He represents and which will always want to see itself reflected in Him, recompose his limbs and carry His emblem; Italy, which unites everyone under His splendid name. Therefore, being all in agreement on this work, we can today present the outline of the book...<sup>113</sup> splendido

While Cellini was the publisher responsible for the official publications of the Centenary such as the *Guida Official del Centenario*,<sup>114</sup> the *Giornale del Centenario*, and *La Festa di Dante*, it did not monopolize the Centenary publications within Florence. Other publishing houses produced works, including the *Albo per memoria del Sesto Centenario celebrato in Firenze a onore di Dante Alighieri l'anno MDCCCLXV*,<sup>115</sup> *Per il sesto centenario di Dante: Ricordo al popolo*,<sup>116</sup> *Nel patrio festeggiare il sesto centenario di Dante Alighieri al Municipio di Firenze alcuni romani [Poesie]*,<sup>117</sup> and the *Scritti utili allo studio della Divina Comedia raccolti da Pietro Rossi*.<sup>118</sup>

In the realm of literary publications, as within other aspects of the Centenary, the commission was aware of the different classes and categories of Italians it was addressing. In order to introduce Dante to Italian families and youngsters, “all of those elements of a new life with which he abounds” (“tutti quegli elementi di nuova vita che in lui sovrabbondano”) the commission conceived an accessible “Edizione nazionale” of the works of Dante Alighieri. The purpose of this opus was the moral education of the youth: “in short, our youths should study in the great book of the Divine Comedy...but they should still find everlasting encouragement and vigor so that the future of our nation can be what civilization rightly expects from Rome’s offspring” (“in una parola, ci vorrebbe che la gioventù nostra nel grande libro della Commedia studiasse ... ma ancora vi trovasse incoraggiamento e vigore perenne che l’avvenire della nazione sia tale quale la civiltà ha ragione di aspettarlo dai figli di Roma”<sup>119</sup>). Arguments for producing the edition “thriftilly and with decorum” (“con economia e decoro”) were put forward so that the collection of the new volumes “would

penetrate with sweet and beneficial persuasion into Italian families, and become their Second Gospel, the holy book of the fatherland" ("penetrasse con dolce e benefica persuasione nelle famiglie Italiane, e ne fosse come il Secondo Vangelo, il libro santo della Patria"<sup>120</sup>). In addition to trying to take Dante into every home, the project succeeded in incorporating other Italian cities into the work of the Centenary. In fact, the commission made a public request to all 7000 municipalities for funds that would go toward the publication of the *Edizione Nazionale*.<sup>121</sup>

Publishing houses outside Florence also contributed to the Centenary. Mantova,<sup>122</sup> Milan,<sup>123</sup> Treviso,<sup>124</sup> Trieste,<sup>125</sup> Padova,<sup>126</sup> Vicenza,<sup>127</sup> Verona,<sup>128</sup> Venezia,<sup>129</sup> Roma,<sup>130</sup> and Catania<sup>131</sup> are among the cities that appear in *the Enciclopedia Dantesca's* bibliography of publications for the occasion. The bibliography is impressive; however, it is not exhaustive. Literary works related to Dante, but not included in this bibliography, were publicized in the *Giornale del Centenario* and *La Festa di Dante*.<sup>132</sup>

In addition, manuscripts, poems, odes, and sonnets were sent as offerings to the Florentine Literary Commission, but went unpublished.<sup>133</sup> Scattered within several *buste*, these manuscripts are preserved in the Communal Archive of Florence.<sup>134</sup> The literary donations ranged from congratulatory letters from major European writers, such as Victor Hugo,<sup>135</sup> to long expository essays by unknown and amateur writers. Many of the manuscripts by these authors, without the means to publish their work, still remain buried in the archive.<sup>136</sup> The writings come from Italian and non-Italian cities, from individuals, and from associations.<sup>137</sup>

These archives, nonetheless, do not hold the entirety of the popular output. As mentioned, this literary production, in terms of quantity, was unprecedented in Italian history.<sup>138</sup> It takes four volumes of Carlo Del Balzo's *Poesie di mille autori intorno a Dante Alighieri* to cover the texts that appeared at this time, largely due to the number of these writings.<sup>139</sup>

## VII. Conclusion

The sheer mass of documents dedicated to the Centenary, found in the Communal Archive of Florence, itself produces a compelling image. At a moment when the Italian territory remained by and

large unknown to its elite unifiers and, conversely, the political center was foreign to peripheral cities and local associations, an obscure Florentine, Guido Corsini, received an overwhelming torrent of correspondences addressed to him. These included letters from municipal and provincial councils, societies, universities and schools, and finally, known and unknown individuals, expressing their desire to participate in the national festival as representatives of the new nation-state in the name of Dante. An image of Florence not only as a cultural center but also as a logistical hub emerges. Such an archive leads the historian to contemplate the ways in which the communal representatives of Florence undertook the complex, multifaceted, and enormous task of national coordination of the festival.<sup>140</sup>

The structures of production and circulation of a cultural industry, developing around the figure of Dante, and viewed in the larger context of the administrative topography of the new nation-state, reveal the tensions experienced by the Moderate Liberal elite as it wavered between commitment to the budding nation and loyalty to its native cities. The Centenary was indeed a national festa. Yet, it was conceived, organized, funded, and spread throughout civil society from a municipal center.



## “Carnevalino” or “Cold Official Discourse”: The Program of the Festa

The most intricate and, ultimately, controversial undertaking of the Florentine Centenary Commission concerned the creation of a program for the festa: decisions on the general dispositions, regulations, activities, symbolism, and length of the event. The commission's responsibilities involved fashioning the repertoire of a formal festival as well as the choreography of the proper dress, gestures, and behavior of the new “Italians.” The undertaking lasted nearly a year, from June 1864 to the eve of the festa. The organizers drafted many versions and offered many revisions.<sup>1</sup> However, there were two fundamental documents. The first was an eight-day agenda ratified by a subcommittee. Cellini published this as the supposed official agenda.<sup>2</sup> The version was then vehemently criticized, censored, and later rewritten as a three-day program, forming the second key document. It was this latter document, published less than two months before the festa, which served as the actual blueprint for the event; it subsequently earned the title of *Guida Ufficiale*.<sup>3</sup>

This chapter begins with a discussion of the first program. It emphasizes the attack on the document as well as the various attempts at its defense. These disputes, while indeed yielding the revised rendition, also reflect the ideological, political, and cultural issues with which the nineteenth-century Italian political elite concerned itself. The chapter then relies on the details of the actual ceremonies and the events of the festa, primarily provided by Henry Clark Barlow's eyewitness account, in order to demonstrate

the ways in which the event itself emerged as a negotiated settlement of the struggles over the program. The discussion of the ceremonies provides crucial evidence concerning the complexities of Italian nation formation in general, particularly in connection to a fundamental polarity between the principles and traditions of monarchy, unitarianism, and elitism, on the one hand, and on the other, the ideals and heritage of republicanism, municipalism, and demoticism.

On June 21, 1864, the president of the General Commission decided that the opinions of that body were too numerous and diverse for an agreement on the program's composition to result. The task, he decided, was best bestowed upon a subcommittee elected through secret vote. The subcommittee, composed of seven experts in various arts, included Garzoni, Uccelli, Sanesi, Falcini, Romanelli, Mabellini, and Zanobini, with Servadio, Romani and Cambi serving as surrogates. Given only the mandate that the festa should last from eight to ten days, and that it should "revive Dante as much as possible" ("richiamare a Dante il più che sarà possibile"), the subcommittee was granted six months to research the issue, and then offer a proposal to the General Commission.

On December 19, 1864, on the eve of the transfer of the capital to Florence, the subcommittee presented the first program, but only after Cellini had already published it.<sup>4</sup> A heated debate followed over the propriety of the proposed schedule. The debate touched upon Italian history, the status of Florence, and the meaning of a celebration of Italian national identity. The deliberations took place publicly in newspapers and periodicals, semipublicly during the meetings of the General Commission, and privately in the correspondences of interested individuals.

When submitting the first program to the General Commission, the subcommittee prefaced its presentation with a statement addressing the unusual difficulty of improvising a "national festa" for the first time. Eloquently and soberly, it observed that in determining the character of the festa the subcommittee could not afford to indulge in the vain fancy of creating the new:

A lot has been said, a lot is being said, and a lot will be said about the nature and type of festa which should celebrate the most

remarkable of the Italians. But if these people who are craving for novelties were asked to rigorously explain what these novelties should consist of, we would find that they would not be able to answer, for it is easier to wish than to obtain, especially with regards to human matters, and because there is nothing new under the sun, as an old saying goes. No one had the privilege of being an inventor, not even the subcommittee. Therefore, rather than dreaming about impossible things, the subcommittee has worked in order to come up with ideas which would fit the exigencies of modern society in combination with those aspects of the past deemed fit to recall in the centennial solemnity.<sup>5</sup>

Having taken as its guideline "the exigencies of modern society in combination with those aspects of the past deemed fit to recall," the subcommittee conceived of an eight-day program to begin May 14, 1865. Two principal objectives served as the guiding criteria concerning the nature of the occasion. The first was that the person of Dante—his life, his misfortunes, his creations, and all that referred to him—should be represented visibly to both the Italian people and to foreigners during those days. The second objective related to the "popular" element. The activities of the festa were to be left to the enthusiasm and initiative of the various classes of the people. Each specific group of citizens would be assigned one day to demonstrate its zeal for this national affair.<sup>6</sup> Popular, literary, musical, and artistic commissions were to be created so as to coordinate the contributions of all sectors: artisans, scientists, academics, the military, artists, and musicians. Each commission was to coordinate its activities nationally, soliciting participation from across Italy. Thus, the corresponding commissions would be given "greater breadth and freedom" (*"la maggiore ampiezza e libertà"*<sup>7</sup>).

As to the first objective, the idea was not only to exhibit Dante's life and work but also, more generally, to turn Florence into a "true temple of memory" (*"vero tempio della memoria"*<sup>8</sup>). Ideally the people would encounter in every step and every turn those "historical memories of the most glorious events" (*"ricordi storici dei fatti più gloriosi"*<sup>9</sup>). The "brief but ancient" (*"breve ma antica"*) religious ceremony, which inaugurated the statue of Dante, was to serve this purpose: "it should be reminiscent of the many public assemblies of the people when the whole country was represented,



either to prepare for battle, or to defend the territory, or to make very serious deliberations" ("ricordino quelle tante radunanze pubbliche e popolari nelle quali la patria intera era rappresentata, o per disporsi ad una battaglia, o per correre alla difesa del territorio, o per prendere gravi deliberazioni"<sup>10</sup>). Other means of recalling Dante and his period included *corsi di gala*, historical floats, a mock naval battle on the Arno river, public charity, and theatrical shows, in short, "all that would bring to heart and mind memories of Dante and his time."<sup>11</sup> The point, the subcommittee observed, was to make sure that the Italian people "realize that Dante could not have been born anywhere else" ("vedrà che qui e non altrove doveva nascere l'Alighieri"<sup>12</sup>).

The subcommittee did consider the second objective, the question of the popular, pivotal to the whole program. As the following citation indicates, this issue was indeed very close to its heart:

It seems, then, that the overall characteristics of the feste and the close connection which exists among them conform to what was dictated by the concept of a solemnity which is being celebrated for the first time, and which we will no longer be able to see again. [...] First comes the popular element, which revives the Poet's times more than anything else, and which forms the strength of the nation consecrated by the plebiscites.<sup>13</sup>

Before moving on to a discussion of the reaction of the General Commission to the proposed program, it will be useful to describe in more detail, the intricate repertoire envisioned for the festa. The program seems grandiose and complicated. Its architect, Stefano Fioretti, had indeed admitted as much in his preliminary summary of the agenda, which was published as early as July 29, 1864.<sup>14</sup> One example of this intricacy is that each day of the festa was to be devoted to a specific sector of society, with a corresponding historical float: one to honor Giano Della Bella for the day of artisans, another for Guido Cavalcanti on the day of scientist, and still another dedicated to Giotto for the festa of professors of fine arts, and so on.

Moreover, the proposed program envisioned a highly decentralized structure for its execution, granting most of the decision-making power to the respective subcommittees. Finally, the program

was unabashedly Florentine, especially considering its assertedly national character. The program itself noted, in fact, that none of its festivities were unprecedented in Florence and that an extensive study of Florentine traditions had been undertaken during its conception.<sup>15</sup>

Various members of the General Commission found the program unacceptable. Their reaction, more precisely, was one of bewilderment, shock, and fierce opposition. The mood in the meeting of December 21 was explosive, all the more so because the program had already been published and publicized. Those in opposition viewed the plan as too long, complicated, and, most fundamentally, undignified. The lament of Casanuova captures this self-conscious disdain:

... That the ancient people, who were more religious than us, could organize great feste, something which we are no longer able to do; that the dances are not appropriate, that putting a crown on the head of the poet's colossal statue becomes ridiculous, and finally that the proposed feste are mere masquerades.<sup>16</sup>

Fratlicelli, the most outspoken and relentless censor of the program, agreed with Casanuova; he found the program "indecent" in terms of both length and content. During the meeting, he argued against an advocate of the program, Servadio, noting that the design was too costly and lacked even minimal decorum. Furthermore, he contended that it diverted the workers away from their labor for an overly extended period. In terms of content, he maintained that the festa should be for Dante only and should exclude all other references.<sup>17</sup>

Cosimo Ridolfi's desperate plea (one of his last, since he died before the festa took place) for an austere and "very simple" ("simplicissima") festa epitomizes the Consorti's considerations:

... He (Ridolfi) only wanted a simple festa and the inauguration of the monument; he therefore [confesses] to the Subcommittee that he fears ridicule, a ridicule which, especially in this city, attacks the most serious matters; nevertheless he thanks the members of the Subcommittee for proposing a program that they considered worthy of this event [...]<sup>18</sup>

These comments reveal the single highest priority for the Consorti at this time: that the festa, considering Florence's "circumstance" or political vulnerabilities, should be distinguished. Ridolfi was expressing a common fear, warning that a festa that subjected Florence to ridicule would have grave consequences for the city.

Only Servadio's conciliatory voice praised the "popularity" of the festa, insisting that it should please the "people." Explaining the rationale for the proposed program, he brought attention to the fact that "...the program established that there should be eight days, so that all social classes and orders would be able to take part" ("...nel programma se ne stabilirono otto per dar luogo a tutte le classi ed a tutti gli ordini sociali di prendervi parte"<sup>19</sup>). Servadio respectfully challenged the assertions of his sternest adversary, Fraticelli, the renowned Dante scholar, asking rhetorically, "what does he mean by dignity, and what parts of the program lack this quality, in his opinion?" ("che cosa intende per dignità ed in quali parti crede il programma privo di questa qualità?"<sup>20</sup>)

Yet this soft defiance did not carry the day. Led by Fraticelli, who was specifically asked by the President to offer an evaluation, the commission made the decision to "modify" the program by (1) reducing the duration of the festa from eight to three days; and (2) electing a new subcommittee to prepare an improved proposal. The latter was done through another secret vote. The new subcommittee was comprised of four members, Giuseppe Poggi (the architect who, in September 1864, had been commissioned to design the renovation and reconstruction of Florence), Bianchi, Frullani, and Uccelli. On December 24, 1865, Guido Corsini's public letter appeared in *La Nazione*, announcing the alterations, since the Centenary Commission had decided that "the way to celebrate this solemn event should be simple, dignified and brief" ("il modo di festeggiare una tanta solennità deve essere semplice, dignitoso e di breve durata"<sup>21</sup>).

The controversy over the character of the program occasioned a series of twelve editorials entitled "Considerazioni sulle feste del Centenario," which appeared in *La Festa di Dante*.<sup>22</sup> The articles vindicated the members of the original subcommittee and cautiously defended the rejected eight-day program. While the first article conceded that the program had been publicized

"prematurely," it expressed the belief that discussion around the outline needed to be clarified publicly:

Nonetheless, since we heard more than one opinion concerning the draft which was imprudently published, we believe that the press has the duty to state its opinion as clearly as possible; for this reason we intend to express all of our ideas about this grave matter.<sup>23</sup>

Addressing the matter of the festa's duration, *La Festa* held that eight or ten days was not too long an interval for such a unique event. After all, this would be the first opportunity for Italians to express their gratitude to Dante, six centuries after his birth. The text defended the popular element by arguing that since all of modern civilization was in debt to Dante, all should have the prospect of participating in the festa. Furthermore, the text expressed its indignation at the suggestions of the program's opponents. It identified these individuals as "positivists" who priggishly suggested that too much festa spoils the people:

But the positivists, whose only positive thing is often the emptiness of their minds, come out and scream that the people cannot spend eight days without working, that so many feste not only relaxes them, but make them weak and idle....<sup>24</sup>

Such considerations were unnecessary, the article continued, since even longer festivals were not new to the Florentine people.<sup>25</sup>

In the next issue, *La Festa* addressed the matter of quality and content: the substance and the activities included in the first program. It supplied the reasons behind the subcommittee's choices for the repertoire, or for what had come to be referred to as the "masquerades." In compiling the program, the subcommittee had consulted old Florentine traditions. The group believed that in order to dignify the memory of Dante, they needed to resuscitate or commemorate his century by recalling the customs and popular festivals that Dante himself did not scorn, as is evidenced by his repeated reference to them in his poetry. Moreover, the initial program ensured that *all* social classes were included.<sup>26</sup> It struggled to maintain the festa close to the spirit of the nation rather than reduce it to a "cold official discourse."<sup>27</sup> *La Festa*, in fact, had published the original program accompanied with inserted

commentaries and explanations for each point so that the reason for the agenda would not appear to come from on high.

The element of the first program that was most vehemently attacked by the opposition was the observance, at the Piazza del Duomo, of the "brief but ancient" religious ceremony that was to take place on the first day. The subcommittee had intended the cortège to make its first stop in Piazza del Duomo, in the manner of the old festa of San Giovanni and other Florentine feste.<sup>28</sup> After the celebration of the mass, the *Gonfaloniere* of Florence would receive a crown from the hands of a priest, which he would then place on the statue of Dante in Piazza Santa Croce. This act, the program indicated, would complete the prophecy of Dante when he wrote that: "with a different voice, with a different fleece I will become a poet again; and on my christening fount I will take my hat" ("con altra voce omai con altro vello, ritornerò poeta; ed in sul fonte del mio battesimo prenderò il cappello"<sup>29</sup>). Opponents attacked this plan because it resembled a religious ceremony, invoking religious pomp. *La Festa*, on the other hand, defended the arrangement by clarifying that it did not aim to use religious pageantry simply to add solemnity to this national festivity. Rather, it intended to pay homage to the religion that had inspired Dante's *Divine Comedy*, and to which Dante professed faith up until his last breath.<sup>30</sup>

Another rejected component of the first program was the appearance of the *carri*. The "modernist" opposition considered the appearance of these floats ridiculous. It deemed them lewd and profane. *La Festa* argued that such critiques ignorantly associated the word "*carri*" either with the idea of the *Carro della Befana*, or with the *carri* pieced together by poor artists in the last days of carnival. They were unaware, contended *La Festa*, of the magnificent historical and allegorical floats crafted in Milan, Turin, or Naples: the past work of celebrated artists collaborating with the nobility and with highly respected citizens. The article then compared the decency of contemporary customs with old Florentine exercises.<sup>31</sup> It asked rhetorically: given the contemporary practices of men dressing up as brigands or women, in daylight and without a face mask, why would the dignified customs of our ancestors be granted the "sad privilege" ("triste privilegio") of being deemed offensive? The floats envisioned by the subcommittee, after all, intended to make use of the most esteemed actors and actresses. The organizers would also consult professors from the Accademia

delle Belle Arti so as to produce representation "worthy of celebrating the memory of the divine Dante Alighieri" ("degni di celebrare la memoria del divino Dante Alighieri"<sup>32</sup>).

In a follow-up article, *La Festa* further maintained that the use of historical floats for celebration of the past did not mean a rejection of modern customs. Nor was this a conservative gesture geared to preserve a barbarous past for the "love of antiquity" ("amore all'antichità"). The deployment of historical floats was intended as an appropriate mnemonic device to recall a rich past, just as it was only logical that one represents an historical drama with the costumes of the period.<sup>33</sup>

The journal put forth a similar line of argumentation in defending the races or *corsi di gala* against those who had resisted it during the meetings of the Centenary Commission.<sup>34</sup> Once more, the paper proposed that a reenactment of old Florentine popular traditions was not undignified; it certainly could not to be reduced to a masquerade or carnival. The text cites Vasari's admiring description of a *corso di gala* as supporting evidence for its point.<sup>35</sup> Such a performance, indeed, was appropriate for a Dante Centenary, which was already represented in a dignified way ("dignitosamente") by literary men, scientists, and musicians. Also contributing to this solemnity were scholarly writings on the *Divine Comedy* and works of charity. The *carri*, the *corsi di gala*, and other festivities, far from subtracting stateliness from the festa, would provide joy and entertainment to the people. *La Festa's* defense of the old popular Florentine tradition ended with the following subtle accusation of the elite in charge of the Centenary:

It seemed instead very honorable to have suggested, for these popular feste, a way to make the shows and celebrations less unworthy of this solemn event; because, if they are left at the mercy of the plebeians, or at the whims of impresarios and speculators [...] we might end up seeing some unworthy representations, if not of our civilization, at least inappropriate and incompatible with the time in which the memory of the divine Dante is being celebrated. How many famous men, how many great ideas had to succumb to the attacks of a *political faction!*<sup>36</sup>

An important component of the program that met fervent resistance, if not publicly then at the General Commission, was the allocation of financial aid to the Fratellanza Artigiana, as

well as public donations to poor families.<sup>37</sup> The first program had proposed that this “charitable” act be a highly visible one, to take place during the first day. Several members of the commission, especially Giuseppe Poggi, rejected this portion of the program on the basis that it was not relevant to a celebration of Dante.

It is remarkable that the critique of the proposed plan coming from *within* the commission did not address its most obvious “flaw.” The program, because it proposed to celebrate exclusively Florentine traditions, and to commemorate solely the history of the Florentine republic, appears far too locally oriented for a celebration of national unity under a monarchy. That is, the subcommittee had seemingly gone astray in its choice of “those aspects of the past deemed fit to recall.” It recalled, indeed, mostly inappropriate or strictly local aspects of that past. One can surmise, nonetheless, that the topic of the overuse of local traditions was on everybody’s mind; this aspect of the program was at the very least discussed privately, perhaps even in public.

We catch a glimpse of these private exchanges from a stunningly frank and passionate correspondence between Enrico Poggi, writer, minister, and Senator, and Piero Fraticelli.<sup>38</sup> Having studied the program in journals, Enrico Poggi penned a letter from his residence in Milan to Fraticelli on Christmas day, 1864. After expressing his contempt for the proposed program, he accuses the Florentine Consorti of harboring “municipalist” and unpatriotic sentiments. The still unpublished letters kept at the Biblioteca Nazionale—so rich in detail as to be impossible to reproduce in tone—are worth citing at length. Poggi begins by thanking Fraticelli for having fought against the program and for being largely responsible for its suppression; Giuseppe Poggi, his brother and Commission member, had informed Enrico on this point. Enrico Poggi then proceeds to state his opinions on the matter, as a Florentine “who has lived in Milan for three years and still breaths the Piedmontese air...” (*dimorante da tre anni a Milano e davvero anco a respirare l’aria piemontese...*):

What made me most indignant about that program was that series of municipal and republican commemorations and celebrations, almost as though Dante had distinguished himself for his municipal

ideas and for his republican spirit; and almost as though this was an opportune moment to be celebrating these ideas.<sup>39</sup>

To Poggi, it was absurd enough to celebrate Dante with municipalist and Republican notions and even more ridiculous to do so at that time. He proceeds to explain precisely who Dante really was and for what he stands today:

Dante is a universal genius, a genius who chose to unite and reconcile civil and religious society. As an Italian, Dante is exceptional, because he always strove to embody the two concepts of national unity and of Italian monarchy, preaching, with regards to Rome, the separation between temporal and spiritual power. His faith in these ideals was greater than that of certain political men who aim at the destruction of both temporal and spiritual power, rather than their separation. Dante largely represented our Risorgimento and our future aspirations, and he would now find, in a Sire of the house of Savoy, that German Alberto, that Greyhound whom he had sought for in vain, and whose imminent coming he had prophesied, for the sake of Italian civilization and religion.<sup>40</sup>

Dante was a universal genius, one who embraced the two grand ideas of national unity and monarchy. Poggi accuses "certain political men" (read, the Tuscan Consorti) of not sustaining Dante's faith: faith in the—quite feasible—separation of church and state. These politicians, therefore, did not live true to Dante's legacy. Poggi then asks in disbelief: "Why don't they want the Dante Feste to express these great ideals [monarchy and national unity]?" ("Come mai non si vogliono le feste dantesche ad esprimere queste grandi idee?").

Above all, Poggi calls attention to the contradiction cited above: that of celebrating a festa of national unity, with the presence of the king, through memories, which have "nothing to do with the present state of Italy"; and to do so for the sake of experiencing and reexperiencing a "puerile Tuscan vanity":

And if the King is here at that time, how can he be present? Italian national government, won't people sense the contradiction, or rather the oddity of so many reminiscences that have nothing to do with the present state of Italy? Reminiscences which would



merely express a puerile Tuscan vanity? The Lombards would not understand a thing, and except for Dante, they would remain indifferent before all the other names of the republican era that were presented to them [...], as I remain indifferent when certain glories and celebrities which are exclusively Milanese are exalted and honored. As for the Piedmontese, they repeat what they already said at the parliament: we told you so, there are no monarchic traditions in Tuscany: all of their memories are republican and municipal.<sup>41</sup>

Such allegations were meant to serve as an alarming admonition to the presumptuous Florentines who assumed that all Italians would, or at any rate *should*, identify with the program and hence should willingly celebrate figures and traditions of the Florentine republic. Imagine if the Florentines themselves were commanded to identify with the local traditions of the Milanese or the Piedmontese! Poggi finds it especially outrageous for the Florentines to insist on memories of a Republican and municipalist past, especially when the king and his court were leaving their native city and adopting Florence as their home, in the name of Italy:

*Not even now* that the house of the Savoy, which is the glory and honor of all Italy, goes to Florence to take up residence there and to accomplish the great ideas of that Noble-Minded Exile, not even now is there any intention to honor that incomparable poet as being anything more than a mere Florentine citizen.<sup>42</sup>

Poggi pleads that Florence abandon the memories of the *campagnile* and autonomy and open herself to “grander Italian concepts.” The city should let go of its medieval past and embrace the nation as a whole. It should cease to boast of her monuments and her great men and instead celebrate the glory and grandeur of other provinces, the first of which is the Piedmontese dynasty:

[...] sing Florence [...] let her aspire to grander Italian concepts, let her abandon her provincial memories of independence and of medieval glories. Exile made Dante a citizen of almost all of Italy; searching among the memories of his life, one can find some episodes worthy of being commemorated much better than certain historical facts which are merely Florentine [...]. I would like Florence to inspire new destinies and to cast aside all remains of a closed-up,

petty life. Let her open up her thoughts, her memories, her affections, and let her try and embrace all of Italy; let her no longer speak of her monuments and of her great men, who from now on will be celebrated every day by the non-Tuscans as well [...]; let her instead become involved with the glory and greatness of the other cities, first of all with the one which fathered the Piedmontese dynasty.<sup>43</sup>

The tone of Fraticelli's prompt response to this passionate denunciation of the Tuscan Consorti is quite revealing.<sup>44</sup> Above all, it exposes exactly to what extent a blunt and direct character such as Pietro Fraticelli could—or could not—reveal his opinions publicly in Florence. Fraticelli was a professor at the Accademia della Crusca, and a thoroughly no-nonsense man. His letters were unusually undeviating; they resorted only minimally to the formalities characteristic of the correspondences of the time.<sup>45</sup> Fraticelli did not necessarily identify himself with the Consorti. In fact, he imagined himself as having ideological enemies, "nemici," among this group. However, socially and professionally he was tied to this powerful Florentine elite. Only four years before, for instance, he had relied on the intervention of Gino Capponi to raise his salary in the Accademia.<sup>46</sup>

Fraticelli, in a manner ever so Florentine in its subtly ironic tone, begins his epistle by addressing Enrico and their relationship:

Dearest Sig. Enrico,

I almost thought you had forgotten about me; I say almost in order to mitigate my expression, since it was not a long time ago that I received your greetings from Signor Bianchi.<sup>47</sup>

Even the rhythm of this opening is meant to calm Enrico's passionate political utterances and move him to a practical and personal level. Before addressing the specific content of Enrico's letter, Fraticelli feels the need to clarify and establish his position vis-à-vis Enrico, as though he had been offended by the heavy handed and patronizing tone of the latter's letter.

The other day I received your nice letter written on the 25th, and I cannot tell you how immensely pleased I was by it; because, Signor Enrico, if you are a true Italian, I believe I am no less Italian than

you; and if I may say so, the reason for this is not some ulterior motive of mine, because I do not need anything; instead, I am just as Italian as you because, as Dante's illustrator and biographer, I desire Italy's greatness as much as he; a greatness which could not exist without unity, nationality, independence and freedom.<sup>48</sup>

After "reminding" Enrico that he himself is no less a true Italian than he (Enrico), Fraticelli enumerates four reasons as to why he fought so vehemently against the proposed program:

Let us now come to the subject of your letter. I fought long and hard against the notorious, monstrous program which was proposed for the Festa di Dante, 1) because according to that program, the festa would celebrate not only Dante, but sixteen more people, like Giani Della Bella, Michele di Lando, Guido Cavalcanti, Forraccio etc., who had nothing to do with the Centenary Festa of the Great Poet; 2) because no sad memories of history should be evoked, such as, for example, our ancestors' class hatred and fratricidal battles; and because, by insisting on commemorating those facts in the piazza, we would become ridiculous, and turn the celebration into a farce and a buffoonery. And not only should sad memories be avoided, but [also] those which, behind a pompous appearance, recalled memories of vassalage among cities [...]; 3) because, by insisting on prolonging the feste to eight days, the event would be turned into a petty carnival, and everything would become a mere bacchanal, something unworthy of what was meant to be celebrated; and because [...] the city has a lot of urgent problems to deal with at present, and since its funds are quite scarce, it would be folly to waste such a large sum [...].<sup>49</sup>

Note that none of the four reasons Fraticelli cites for having rejected the program—namely, that it celebrated historical figures other than Dante, evoked sad memories of war between different Italian city-states, was too long and thereby would turn the festa into a *carnevalino*, and finally, that it wasted too much money—corresponds directly to Enrico's explicit and clear criticism: that the program celebrated uniquely Florentine and Republican memories. Fraticelli then explains why he cannot "raise" his argument to the plane of Enrico's:

I have strived always to raise the level of discussion, and not to let myself be dragged into what my adversaries were trying to do. That

is, I always strove scrupulously to keep the discussion on a higher plane, analyzing every single festa which had been proposed, and I succeeded. But I couldn't have risen to the plane you mentioned in your so gracious letter, nor would it have been convenient, because the question would have become too delicate, and it certainly would have caused turmoil within the assembly. And if that had happened, we would never have reached a conclusion, and instead I wanted to reach a conclusion and I did. If at the next meeting, my adversaries give me this opportunity, I will do my best to say something with regards to this, though in such a way as not to provoke anybody.<sup>50</sup>

Here we observe the crucial point: the Consorti had excluded the possibility of discussing a key issue, one apparent to most, surrounding the Centenary, to wit, "Tuscan vanity." Tuscany's self-promotion, its valorization of its own municipalist traditions vis-à-vis the Piedmontese monarchy, did not enter the debates. It is as if the competing factions, while promoting distinct ideologies, did so in order to maintain their common ground, and hence induce a consensus—via non-response and silence—concerning the "just centrality" of Florence in the new Italy.

The discourse on the festa was inhibited not only during the meetings of the commission, in which Fraticelli considered the issue "too delicate, one that certainly would have caused a turmoil within the assembly." Such constraint is present even when Fraticelli is writing to Enrico, in a private correspondence. Fraticelli once more demonstrates his resistance to the overt charges of Enrico at the letter's conclusion, when he states that if he finds opportunity in the future to discuss this matter, "I will do my best to say something with regards to this, though in such a way as not to provoke anybody."

As late as February 1865, three months before the scheduled date of the festa, the General Commission still lacked an acceptable program and faced the difficult task of preparing for the transfer of the capital. For a brief time, the commission entertained the idea of postponing the festa to a more convenient time, perhaps September, the anniversary of Dante's death. But the commission decided against such a delay, citing the following reasons:

First, because we have a commitment to the whole world, which wants to celebrate it in May, as it coincides with the Poet's birth,

and we have no right to postpone it to September, which would be the sad anniversary of his death, or to any other period, since we went on for six centuries without remembering to celebrate it. Secondly, since the Festa is limited to three days, as long as these are in the month of May, they can easily precede or follow the settling of the capital or the Festa del Tiro Nazionale, according to the dates which will be established for them. Thirdly, morally speaking, since the city where Dante was born has been called in this solemn anniversary to be the new center of the united Italy that he desired, the city itself should be particularly enthusiastic about these feste, and it should insist on celebrating them in that period. Fourth, that, once the appropriate preparations have been established, no complication shall arise, so that the feste can be celebrated in honor of this city which today it is accused of idleness, but which in the past, even while it was torn apart by civil strife, still managed to erect those monuments which the world now admires.<sup>51</sup>

The revised subcommittee therefore urgently took on the task of compiling a new program. Throughout January and February 1865, the details of the agenda were negotiated in minute detail and through heated discussion.<sup>52</sup> Each article was read, debated, and voted upon during the most heavily attended meetings of the General Commission.<sup>53</sup> On February 10, the subcommittee presented the three-day plan. *Giornale del Centenario* warned that the very reputation of Florence rested on the municipality's speedy approval of a budget, since time was running dangerously short:

If the municipality waits any longer to give its approval, the risk is that, in this important matter, Florence might not be up to her fame, and especially nowadays, when some have begun to judge it unfavorably.... The Centenary Festa is a matter of extreme importance, not only for repairing the Florentine character, which it does, but especially for the national character which [the Festa] was to acquire, and which it is in fact acquiring more and more every day.<sup>54</sup>

## The Final Program

Reducing the duration of the festa from eight to three days transformed the event to such a degree that a complete analysis of the alterations would prove tedious. However, it is important to take

note of several important general changes, specifically in connection with the central component of the festa: the cortège from Piazza Santo Spirito to Piazza Santa Croce and the subsequent inauguration ceremony.

Broadly, the final program proved less "popular" than did its predecessor. By censoring Florentine popular traditions, this second program in fact nearly cut out the popular element altogether. Most notably absent was the Fratellanza Artigiana and other Italian mutual-aid societies, which had been allocated a central position in the original program. In that earlier agenda, the representatives of Fratellanza Artigiana and of the Italian mutual-aid societies, their banners and signs held high so as to welcome the cortège into the Piazza Santa Croce, were to be extremely and visibly present.<sup>55</sup> The idea, as the program itself explained, was to recall the time of the Republic when these sorts of institutions had intervened during the Festa of San Giovanni. Now, the mutual-aid societies would not appear as a single body, but divided vis-à-vis their respective provinces. They would emerge not independently, but alongside other institutions, such as various academies and schools, also representing the individual provinces.<sup>56</sup> Effectively, this form of representation annulled the corporate identity of the mutual-aid societies on a national level.

The first program had also envisioned the Gonfaloniere of Florence performing the donation of endowments and grants (*doti* and *sussidi*) to these societies, an event which was to take visible form during the ceremonies of the first day, to "promote harmony among all Italians, and sanctify this great day with deeds of public interest and charity" ("promuovere la Concordia fra tutti gli italiani, e santificare questo bel giorno con opere di pubblica utilità e beneficenza"<sup>57</sup>). This ceremony of the allocation of *doti*, in the later agenda, was transformed into a brief affair in which only the Florentine component of the Fratellanza was to receive the donations from a committee of representatives of the various societies, "after which the organizations should disperse" ("dopo la quale si scioglieranno"<sup>58</sup>). Most crucially, this procedure was moved from the first to the last order of business, at six in the evening during the third and final day of the festival.<sup>59</sup>

The final program was no longer posited a decentralized festa, as was envisioned by the earlier one. The popular element ceased to

be pivotal; the granting of “initiative” to the people had been withdrawn. It would now be a festa where “ceremonial hierarchy”<sup>60</sup> reigned and special attention was given to the precise minutia within the program.

Where the earlier program had not been specific about the order of appearance of all the institutions and corporations participating in the cortège, the second program imposed such an order. Certain organizations thus gained an unprecedented stature, and others were either excluded or placed low in the hierarchy.

Without a doubt the rise of the press in this ceremonial hierarchy is most remarkable. The precise nature of this institution is the topic of [chapter 5](#). For now, let us simply note that, during the Centenary, one hundred representatives of the Italian press were placed at the head of the cortège. They were followed by other institutions in the following sequence: provinces in alphabetical order, foreigners, the commission for the statue of Dante, the Commission for the Dante Centenary, the municipalities of Florence and Ravenna, and representatives of the military in full uniform. All institutions carried their banners and insignia.

Whereas the press gained in stature and importance in the second program, the religious component, predictably, lost ground. This loss was demonstrated symbolically by the festa’s exclusion of the ceremony at the Duomo, planned in the first program. The mass was excised, as was the ceremony in which the Gonfaloniere was to receive a crown from the hand of a priest.

If there was greater “control of the festa” rather than “festa”<sup>61</sup> in the final program of the Dante Centenary festivals, the organizers managed to execute a design that was presented (and mostly perceived) as a moving, truly national event. Florence and Florentine tradition remained evident, above all in the epigraphs inscribed across the city. Yet the rhetoric, the speeches, and the ceremonies compensated for this “localism” by valorizing national unity under the rule of King Victor Emmanuel, cast now as the “true” heir of Alighieri.

The *Guida Ufficiale* provides a detailed account of the setting for the first day ceremonies. Article 1 reads as follows: “the piazza of Santa Croce, where the national monument to Dante will be inaugurated, will be lavishly decorated with flowers and laurels interwoven in trophies, with pictures of themes from the

life of Dante, and epigraphs related to them" ("La piazza di Santa Croce, ove sarà inaugurato il monumneto nazionale a Dante, sarà riccamente addobbata con fetoni di lauri e fiori intrecciati a trofei con pitture decorative i cui soggetti appartengano alla vita di Dante e con epigrafi analoghe.")<sup>62</sup> Article 2 states that "the city will be decorated with flags. Names and trophies will be attached to the houses where the most famous citizens were born, lived or worked" ("La città sarà imbandierata. Alle case ove nacquero, vissero, ovvero operarono i più famosi cittadini, sarà posto, il loro nome ornato con trofei, lauri e fiori.")<sup>63</sup> And article 3 notes that "the streets traversed by the cortège and also some of the principal squares, will be decorated with statues, columns, and trophies in memory of the most glorious events of Italian history, and of the individuals of fame in literature, science, art, as well as, in civil and military virtues" ("Lo stradale percorso ed alcune delle principali piazze della città, saranno addobbate con colonne, statue e trofei in memoria dei più illustri fatti della storia italiana, e degli uomini più celebri nelle lettere, nelle scienze, nelle arti, e nelle virtù civili e militari. Il portico degli Uffizi sarà elegantemente ornato.")<sup>64</sup>

The cortège made its way from Piazza S. Spirito, passed Via Maggio over Ponte S. Trinita, and headed to Piazza S. Trinita along Via Tornabuoni. It then turned into the Piazza del Duomo, through Via Proconsolo, finally entering Piazza S. Croce. The epigraph on the entrance to Piazza S. Croce, which read "Italians, honor the great Poet. The homage that you render to him, vindicates the debt of six centuries and attests to the world the fact that you are a nation" ("Italiani, onorate l'altissimo Poeta. L'omaggio che rendete a lui vendica l'oblio di sei secoli e atesta al mondo che siete nazione,")<sup>65</sup> rendered virtually unforgettable by its frequent citations in the press. Henry Clark Barlow, an English Dantophile present at the festa, minutely reports the scene at Piazza S. Croce, where the ceremonial uncovering of the statue of Dante, and the paying of homage to the king, took place:

Here seven hundred ensigns and standards of bright colors and costly materials, nearly all of them embroidered expressly for the festival, were clustered together in glowing community; and with the glittering arms and accoutrements of the national Guards and the Royal troops that assisted, and the military costumes of the



numerous bands...an effect was produced which those who saw it will not soon forget.<sup>66</sup>

At eleven o'clock, the cortège that had departed from S. Spirito at eight in the morning reached the Piazza S. Croce. Then "a universal shout" announced the arrival of the king.<sup>67</sup> The king took a seat in a central position approximate to the statue of Dante. Behind him stood the representatives and deputies of the Italian provinces, replete with their ensigns, gonfalons, and banners. Various armorial bearings of ancient and modern Florentine guilds were also represented in this section. Suspended in the Piazza were the gonfalons of forty major Italian cities. Also present were the arms of the eighty Tuscan communes in alphabetical order, as well as of the principal municipalities of Italy, floating in front of the church. Behind the throne, where the king would sit, the royal ensign was in evidence. Raised at the four corners of the piazza hung the gonfalons of Rome and Venice, of Ravenna and Florence.<sup>68</sup> In the middle of the Piazza stood the still veiled statue of Dante. Barlow continues with his reflections:

Piazza Santa Croce had become the *nucleus* of a great nation, a place doubly sanctified by past and the present.... For the first time in history, the Italian nation came together as one man.<sup>69</sup>

The organization of space, as well as the supervision of subjects *in space* along the path of the cortège and in the Piazza S. Croce, served as visual representation of the geographical, social, and political unity of the Italian nation. Moreover, the cortège connected the actuality of the Italian nation to its past, a past recalled by inscriptions, flags, and banners. The unity of the Italians was figured through a center/periphery relationship. Thus Piazza S. Croce was the "nucleus" of a nation, where the king received homage from representatives of all of Italy, mobilized at once in Florence for the occasion of this Centenary. The binding of the municipal representatives—bound together, but also tethered to the king in the Piazza S. Croce—was reiterated by the *simultaneous* participation of the people of the Italian provinces celebrating the occasion *each in their own province*.

Discussing the role of ritual in tying local communities to central powers, David Kertzer underscores the efficacious mechanism

of simultaneous symbolic action. Participation in ritual action at the same time, by diverse and distant groups, he adds, creates the perception of social and political unity especially when the material and political infrastructure of a state are weak—as is often the situation with a new state: "In simultaneity lies political communion."<sup>70</sup>

The *formal* effect created through such a merger is political consensus: in the case at hand, the reconciliation of various regions of Italy, signifying the end of national struggles. But let us not forget that the new consensus also possessed a *content*: the ceremonies of the festa, to reiterate, equated the commemoration of Dante's birth with the celebration of national unity under King Victor Emmanuel. Yet the events were also means by which Florence laid claim to a privileged position: it served as the site of mediation, as the means to produce identification between Italians and their monarch.

This simultaneous identification and mediation found its articulation most clearly in the ceremony that followed the cortège into the Piazza S. Croce. The sequence of events, in order, ran as follows: a grand symphony, a speech of the Gonfaloniere, the unveiling of the monument of Dante, an address by Padre Giuliani, and a hymn to Dante by Guido Corsini, secretary of the Centenary Commission. Gonfaloniere Cambray Digny's speech is worth quoting at length:

Gentlemen. This concourse of the representatives of so many illustrious cities, of so many distinguished institutions at the feet of the statue that today we inaugurate, *and the august presence of the king of Italy* in this solemn assembly, have a sublime and grand signification. From Alighieri Italy had her language, the first element of unity; from him she had also the idea of nationality which for five centuries has been working within her, until the obstacles to its accomplishment having been overcome under our own eyes, *and by the work of a magnanimous king, the idea has become transformed into a fact.* If, therefore, the memory and the teachings of that great man, jealously guarded in the souls of the Italians, during the long continued oppression, were the germs whence the events had their origin, of which we have been the witnesses and the actors, it was right that liberated Italy should celebrate with singular honors the first secular anniversary of his birth. It is not therefore, only to the most exalted Poet, the illustrious philosopher, and the great citizen

that we this day render due and merited homage. No, Gentlemen, all of us here assembled and come together from the most distant parts of Italy, *all of us, from the August Monarch down to the representative of the most humble free town*, have hastened to affirm again, in the face of the whole world the glorious resurrection of the Italian nation, our indissoluble unity, and our independence. And we affirm it in the noblest manner, revealing to the astonished nations the original author of the work, not yet completed, but henceforth assuredly our regeneration. Let Italy, therefore and Europe, and the whole civilized world recognize and know that the festival which the city of the Poet's birth this day celebrates, and this act which is by us accomplished, are none other than solemn confirmation of the compact which unites us together the scattered members of the ancient mother of modern civilization. And since the duty of my office calls me, however undeservedly, to be the first to raise a voice in the midst of you, *may the King's most excellent majesty deign to receive from my own lips the expression of the homage of the fidelity of this city*, which aspires to nothing else than to dedicate itself to the fulfillment of the destinies of Italy: and may the populations of the Kingdom accept our fraternal salutation who, one and all of us, pant only to sacrifice ourselves to the glory and prosperity of our common country.<sup>71</sup>

After this announcement, Barlow observes, the statue of Dante was unveiled amidst great shouts and displays of emotion.

The Gonfaloniere's liturgical speech, as "performative utterance,"<sup>72</sup> initiated and (re)constituted<sup>73</sup> the consensual social body of the Italian nation. "We," the representatives, are here to testify to the fact that "we," now the Italians, have functioned both as "witnesses" and as "actors" of Italian unity. The discourse extends further in order to furnish that unity and/or consensus with a hierarchical structure, *at the top of which is the king*: "all of us, from the august king down to the representative of the most humble free town. . . ."

Thus, in this projection of national unity, certain entities were designated as privileged and central protagonists: the monarchy as well as Florence. As opposed to the first program, wherein which one could detect the Florentine's resistance to the institution of monarchy—hence the famous laments that "in Tuscany we do not have the tradition of monarchy"—the actual festa indeed carved out a central slot for the king. This arrangement was not only

constructed through the king's physical positioning during the ceremony; it was also constituted figuratively through the association of Dante, the first father of the "patria," and Victor Emmanuel, the first monarch of Italy. The homage to the king was replicated in the homage to Dante: "may the king's most excellent majesty deign to receive from my own lips the expression of the homage of the fidelity of this city."<sup>74</sup> The representatives, then, gathered not only "at the feet of the (Dante) statue we today inaugurate," but also at the feet of the "august presence of the king of Italy." And again, to those skeptics who might have felt obligated to give credit to other Italians, specifically to Mazzini and Garibaldi—whose ideas and actions had of course contributed significantly to the work of national unification<sup>75</sup>—the Gonfaloniere testifies to and affirms the singular "work of the magnanimous king, [through which] the idea [of nationality] has become transformed into a fact."

The city of Florence gained stature by standing as the hub of a national festival: by forming the event's very organizational and administrative center, and by turning itself into "the temple of memories" of the culture that gave birth to Dante. The inscriptions of glorious reminiscences of the Florentine, rather than of the Italian past, indeed marked the path of the cortège, (contrary to the claims of the *Guida ufficiale*). The inscriptions in Piazza S. Spirito, for example, commemorated the uprising of the Ciompi in 1378 when "*il popolo minuto* took arms against the government...to reform the state" (nel 1378 il popolo minuto levatosi in armi abbattè il governo...a riformare lo Stato.)<sup>76</sup> Cosimo Ridolfi, the Florentine Centenary member who died a few days prior the festival, was remembered in Via Maggio as a "friend and benefactor of people who served the patria...and wanted to restore the Dante chair in Florence" ("amico e benefattore del popolo, servì la patria...volle instaurata la cattedra di Dante in Firenze.")<sup>77</sup> On the Ponte della Trinità inscriptions conjured an image of the Tuscan hero Piero Capponi, "who with Roman Courage performed, carried out with fierce arrogance, and with patriotic joy, the wondrous overcoming of the great menace of the excitement of the arms" (con ardimento romano attutò la tracotanza del feroce con gioia cittadina mirò impallidire il superbo alla magnanima minaccia eccitatrice delle armi.)<sup>78</sup> Also noteworthy were epigraphs to Antonio Giacomini, in memory of his public service, his

rare "Liberalism," and his "sober temperance"; to the Florentine Salvino Degli Armati, inventor of eyeglasses; and to Bruno Latini, Dante's great teacher. The Baptistry and the Duomo were verbally commemorated as well. Of note, too, was the still unfinished facade of the Duomo "after three centuries of splendid tyranny," juxtaposed as it was with the "redemption of Italy, in the name of the divine Alighieri."<sup>79</sup>

The Tuscan Moderates' rendering of unification under the Savoyard king as a predestined "fact" was a calculated negotiation. Indeed, the key to valorization of the Piedmontese monarchy lay in the erasure of other nationalist alternatives to monarchic unification, such as the Democratic/Mazzinian plan of unification, and the pro-papal neo-Guelf conception. Such exclusions encouraged popular conformity, and legitimized the present sociopolitical arrangements. Mark Block's observation, while addressing other contexts, is here applicable: "It is precisely through the process of making a power situation appear a fact in the nature of the world that . . . authority works."<sup>80</sup>

The oratorical constitution of unity, and the subsequent legitimization of the monarchy, was executed again subsequent to the Gonfaloniere's pronouncement, this time by a Florentine priest, Padre Giuliani. After honoring Dante for having provided the language of unity and the bond of fraternity to the entire populace of Italy (he held that Dante's poems were "infused [with] the spirit of the Nation"), the priest went on to say:

Civilization draws new life from religion. As the uniting force and consolation of human souls, Dante recommended it incessantly, and desired *priesthood should abstain from meddling in mundane affairs*, by which so easily the guiding star through heavenly paths is missed, and lost to sight. To tame the rage of factions, and to subdue the power of tyrants, *Dante conceived the idea of a Monarchy that might more effectually bind the people to each other*, might unite Caesar to Rome, Rome to Italy, and Italy to the world, and recall men under public and most sacred ensign of Justice. . . . May adverse discord never more attempt to break so holy a tie, nor undo the prodigious transformation of so many hearts into one. . . . that errors of the past (civic discords) never accurse again. . . . Nor could the austere semblance of Alighieri put off its severity and clothe itself in a smile of entire satisfaction, while Rome still weeps, and

Venice, beneath the indignant yoke of a foreign oppressor, in pain and suffering, beats her troubled breasts.<sup>81</sup>

Giuliani then made allusions to the Italian banner, symbol of national redemption. He also addressed the foreigners present by remembering Dante as poet of all Christianity.<sup>82</sup>

The claim that "Dante desired (that the) priesthood should abstain" from politics, and that he "conceived the idea of a monarchy that might more effectually bind people together," possessed all the more resonance coming from a Catholic priest. For the Liberal monarchists the work of delegitimizing the moral authority and the political weight of the pope in a Catholic country was a more complex, pressing, and difficult task than delegitimizing the Democratic Republicans. Religion, and specifically the sanctity of the pope, could not be altogether excluded or delegitimized. It needed instead to be appropriated, disarmed, and depoliticized. Dante's figure and legacy, his oppression and excommunication by the medieval Papacy, and finally his conception of unity under a monarch, were most "useful tools" for the work of the moral and political diffusion of Catholicism in the middle of the nineteenth century.

By resurrecting these older political symbols, the Liberal monarchists affirmed their legitimacy by borrowing from the past, positing those symbols *in terms of a debt*. The unification of Italy under Victor Emmanuel was a long-overdue "revindication of the past," a debt that Italians owed to Dante, who suffered at the hands of the pope due to his just and noble dream for Italy. This obligation—it was repeated again and again during the course of the festival and in the literary productions associated with it—was in fact overdue by six hundred years.

The political value of this ritualistic affiliation of Dante with the Italian people, on the one hand, and on the other, the association of Dante's papal opponent, with the present "foe" of the Italian nation,<sup>83</sup> Pope Pius IX, did not go unnoticed by the latter. The pope abstained from sanctioning the festival; he did not allow the Church to take part in it in any way.<sup>84</sup> The pope went further, undercutting the effect of this national festival by reinforcing the Church's own sacred symbols. He planned a Catholic festival in honor of Peter to be celebrated in 1867, "thus giving the

Church an opportunity to recover its reputation for magnificent shows.”<sup>85</sup>

Following the ceremony, in any case, the representatives of the different Italian provinces were directed to the cloister of Santa Croce, where the Gonfaloniere of Florence received their banners.<sup>86</sup> The center of festivities was then moved to the Cascine, where a traditional tournament (*torneo*) took place, commemorating the peace concluded between the Guelfs and the Ghibellines in 1304.<sup>87</sup> The conflict between these medieval Florentine factions was significant for Dante; after all, Dante was a Ghibelline who was sent into exile by the pro-papal Black Guelfs. But in fact, the terms ‘Guelf’ and ‘Ghibelline’ were reminiscent of political factionalism during Risorgimental Tuscany. The Livornese Democrats who ousted the Grand Duke in 1848, and ruled Tuscany for two months, were likened to the Ghibellines. Conversely, the movement tied to Gioberti and his program for the unification of Italy under the presidency of the pope received the label of a neo-Guelf movement (the Moderate Tuscans such as Ricasoli associated this program with the message of Savonarola).<sup>88</sup> The commemoration of the harmony between the Ghibellines and the Guelfs during this festival, therefore, was at the same time a tribute to Dante’s suffering. It worked as a monarchical political lesson, one all the more powerful for its ambiguity: factionalism equals suffering, and reconciliation equals restitution, health. The resurrection of these historical/mythical images from the Florentine past, in other words, had the effect of mystifying and legitimizing the power of the Tuscan Liberals, who had effectively eradicated both the neo-Guelf movement and the Democratic provisional government.

During the second day of the festival, the labor of what Clifford Geertz has called “demonstrating sovereignty to skeptics” continued.<sup>89</sup> The targeted “skeptics” on this occasion were the representatives of the European and American nations, 128 of them, who had witnessed the events of the previous day and who were now invited to a grand banquet at a private Palazzo.<sup>90</sup> The motivation of this banquet was the need of the new Italian state to correct its precarious position in the international arena. Since the death of Cavour, the most respected diplomat of Italy, even the nations most sympathetic to the cause of Italy had expressed doubts about the fragile unity of the nation. Following the death of Cavour,

Napoleon III expressed a prevalent attitude when he noted that: "The driver has fallen from the box; now we must see if the horses will bolt or go back to the stable."<sup>91</sup>

At the banquet, two Italian representatives—the Gonfaloniere of Florence Cambray Digny, and Count Mamiani as the representative of Victor Emmanuel at Florence—delivered speeches that, in effect, were public *interpretations* of the events of the day before. The speeches were performances themselves, oaths of solidarity; they were conveyed so as to maximize the significance of incidents just witnessed by the foreign representatives. After offering a toast to the king first, and then another to the health of the foreign guests, the Gonfaloniere went on:

[They] have seen on the Piazza of Santa Croce our thousand banners, formerly the emblems of civil strife, encircling the crown of the grand National Standard, on which, as the star of safety, shines the Savoyard Cross, and in that same square, at the feet of the statue of the citizen of Italy, they beheld deputations from all the Italian provinces gathered around that king to whom the Italian nation owes everything.... Such a spectacle was a cordial proof that the fraternal affection of the Italian peoples among themselves, and their gratitude to the noble house of Savoy, henceforth render secure and unmovable the new kingdom of Italy. I trust, therefore that our illustrious guests will be convinced of this fact, and on recrossing the Alps, will help diffuse and generalize the persuasion.<sup>92</sup>

The vagueness of the symbols and of the meanings of those symbols—Dante emerges as the great Christian poet, as the first patriot, as a Florentine citizen, and as an Italian citizen—was fundamental to the political success of the festival. Such ambiguity permitted all who venerated Dante to participate, regardless of their allegiance to the Piedmontese king.<sup>93</sup> However, in addressing the foreign representatives, the Italian leaders used the events of the festival to communicate specific messages concerning the unity and stability of the kingdom, and the legitimate sovereignty of the King of Savoy. As to these points, and in this context, meaning could not be left ambiguous; a specific interpretation of the experience had to be put forth.

Kertzer contends that ritualistic behavior is a convincing medium for the communication of messages that aid in the construction



of political realities: “as a form of formalized communication, it presents us with a well-defined course of action... [it] lead[s] us to interpret our experiences in certain ways... [it] highlights a limited series of vivid images, while excluding much else from the perceptual field.”<sup>94</sup> Thus, the performances of May 14 made it possible for Count Mamiani to offer suggestive remarks, perhaps absurd to the critical mind, as he addressed foreigners:

Scarcely arisen from the sepulcher, we begin already to exhibit to the world a practical pattern from which any people whatever might derive advantage. It was said...that revolutions always require that sad remedy of dictatorships.... But we, as you perceive, cause unity and law, revolution and liberty, to proceed with equal steps.... Hatred and persecution of classes do not here exist. Our patricians march, as it were, at the head of our regeneration, and the people follow willingly and independently. In Italy there are neither conquerors nor conquered... therefore, illustrious strangers seated at this table, on returning to your native cities, deny with all your force the common error that the populace (*la plebe minuta*) feel and know none other than their local interests, never rise to general and abstract conception.... In Italy you have ocular demonstration that the multitude join in one idea their highest interest and the resolution to give blood and lives for... Italy.<sup>95</sup>

It almost goes without saying that the Italy that Mamiani was constructing for foreign representatives was in fact a systematic misrepresentation of the political actualities of the day. The “endemic rebelliousness” of the peasantry and the working class, the repressive measures taken by the government to crush the brigandage both in the south and the north of Italy during this time, have been recorded and studied by Italian historians.<sup>96</sup> Most recently the Turin Massacre of 1864—alluded to in a reference to the occasion of the transfer of the Italian capital to Florence—had served as a visible and embarrassing expression of the regionalism of both the general populace and the elite. These “disturbing” facts could effectively be expunged during a ritual representation of the political scene, since “what is persuasive about ritual is the way it discourages critical thinking.”<sup>97</sup> Tellingly, Mamiani, in his discourse concerning the consensual unity of Italians, constantly directed the vision of his listeners to the events of the ceremonies

of the previous day, using phrases such as "in Italy you have ocular demonstration" and "as you perceived," rather than to the socio-political reality.

## Conclusion: Modernity, Tradition, and the Politics of Pedagogy

The various versions of the festa program and the controversies surrounding its modification played out publicly and in private correspondences, shed light on the confusing politics of modernity and tradition which were operative during the first decade after unification in Italy. The facts of the dispute, and the issues adopted and promoted by different groups, encourage a rethinking of the way in which these terms—tradition, modernity—are commonly used.

The terms "modern" and "traditional" were pivotal to the cultural formations of postunification Italy. The words cannot be dissociated from the Catholic Church's condemnation of the "modern" in Pio IX's "Syllabus of Errors" issued in December 1864, months prior to the Dante Centenary. The last "error" that the syllabus condemns reads: "The Roman Pontiff can and must reconcile himself to and come to terms with progress, with Liberalism, and with modern civilization."<sup>98</sup> As if in the same breath *La Civiltà Cattolica*, the main organ of the Catholic church in Rome, reviled the Centenary festival and its rituals, for functioning as the straitjackets of a "national" festival and "civilized man" ("l'uomo civile"): "These are just accessories in a *national* festa which concentrates on the cult of *civilized* man and is completely extraneous to the religious citizen" ("Questi [the symbolic and cultural material of the Centenary festa] sono accessori in una festa *nazionale*, ristretta tutta al culto dell'uomo *civile* ed estranea al cittadino religioso"<sup>99</sup>).

Another hallmark of modernity is its "opposition to the traditional."<sup>100</sup> In fact, if the national festa of the Dante Centenary was a modern festa, it was so—perhaps to an even greater degree than its disregard for the Church can be viewed as modern—for its rejection, or at least in its attempt, to erase "tradition" as articulated in the first proposed program. Paradoxically, in this rebuff, the Dante Festival became less "modern," if by modern we also

refer to those cultural behaviors that are associated with the ideas of Liberalism and democracy, with a resistance to political and cultural elitism, and with “the theme of art for everyone.”<sup>101</sup>

The original subcommittee associated with the journal *La Festa di Dante*—written, to reiterate, in simple language for the *popolani*—cast a festival that, while invoking Florentine traditions, was accessible and inclusive. But popular education and culture were not, ultimately, what certain influential Centenary committee members such as Fraticelli, Gino Capponi of the Accademia della Crusca and Cosimo Ridolfi, the famous minister of education, had in mind, neither in general nor for the festa in particular.<sup>102</sup> The idea of the modern, promoted strongly by the final program, was hardly in opposition to tradition but, precisely, hinged on tradition’s recall. Perhaps however the Centenary’s claim to “modernity” should not be viewed as duplicitous or exceptional but as a confirmation of certain general rules. Modernity’s preservation of tradition is as fundamental to its formation as is any “break”; consequently, modernity is never grounded on a split from the past but on a certain historical reconstruction, or more accurately, on the creation of a faction that situates its “reconstruction” in opposition to others, in the name of modernity. The effort, on the part of the General Commission, to produce a particular modernity, thereby to stand as vehicles of progress—a progress that is almost strictly formal—mediates the celebration of Dante, as much political negotiation as fête.

## Inclusion and Exclusion: The Logic of Participation

*The function of culture is to cultivate the identity between the ideal or ethical Man in every subject and the state which is its representative.<sup>1</sup>*

For the occasion of the Centenary, and for the first time in history, 50,000 Italians (30,000 of whom were non-Florentine) gathered in the new capital of the nation-state. They represented more than 1200 associations from across Italy. These included envoys from 543 municipalities, 31 provincial councils, 15 national guards, 208 mutual-aid societies, 113 academies, 159 universities and schools, 44 professional committees, and 100 journals.<sup>2</sup> Such a congregation was an unprecedented episode; never before had Italian social and political associations assembled in a public and spatial unity. La Festa dello Statuto, which had been celebrated throughout Italy since 1860, never brought together Italians from different provinces. Rather, it was observed simultaneously (yet in isolation) within each province and/or city.

Thus, the sheer number of people within one procession and one piazza was repeatedly cited as a testimony to the Centenary's truly national nature. The organizers of the event constructed an image of this festa as a participatory, inclusive, enthusiastic, and spontaneous union of the representatives of all sections and sectors of the Italian nation.

The actual events of the festa, we have seen, resembled more a theatre than a communal festa proposed in its initial stages. The

actual festa was controlled and lacked the spontaneous rejoicing that the term festa or fête implies.<sup>3</sup> This chapter will analyze (1) to what degree the “representatives” were participants, and to what degree they were spectators; (2) the logic of inclusion and exclusion employed by the Centenary organizers; (3) whether the representatives partook in the festa with abandoned enthusiasm or via calculated negotiations; and finally (4) the way in which the representation was mediated rather than direct and what was the precise form of the mediation. The chapter, in brief, addresses two central issues: the actual composition of the festa’s participants; and the “inculcation of a peculiar mode of subjectivity: a mode of subject that must somehow be produced as a prerequisite to participation in the business of the state, even if participation, here, means no more than accepting ‘being represented.’”<sup>4</sup>

In its first meetings, we noted, the Centenary Commission had conceived of the festa as a popular event. It deemed it necessary that “the living force of the country come to help in the difficult task” of preparing for the Centenary. The commission decided that all citizens, of whatever class and condition, enjoyed both the right and the duty to contribute:

[The commission] fully aware of the importance and solemnity of the festa which, by celebrating Dante, was thus an Italian, or rather European, festa, unanimously recognized the need for all the active forces of the country to come to help in this difficult task. The reason for this was not merely the national character of this solemn event, which was going to involve the whole city of Florence as the home of the poet; but also the fact that, by being the first, secular celebration of Dante’s glory, what every citizen of every social class and condition had the right and the responsibility to be involved in it and to give a hand....In other words, everybody was to be represented by it.<sup>5</sup>

In order to represent this “everybody,” the commission initially named three permanent subcommittees from three classes of the Florentine citizenry, classes that betrayed the residual continuation of *ancien regime* categories: the *patrizi*, the *Commercianti/capitalisti*, and the *industrianti/popolari*.<sup>6</sup> The role of youth was granted special attention: “It is necessary to inculcate this view upon the young, and therefore energetic, people; the main goal is to have

them share the task of preparing the May festa” (“la necessità di portare le comuni vedute sopra persone giovani e quindi attive per il precipuo oggetto di dividersi poi il lavoro preparatorio alle feste del Maggio”<sup>7</sup>).

The Commission mobilized national participation, constructing through various networks—educational, fund-raising, and literary—a widespread identification with the project prior to the actual event. It conducted a stunningly successful public relations campaign; the success went far beyond the imagination of even the organizers themselves. The latter managed to mobilize not only those social bodies that were sure to identify with the Liberal Moderate’s national cause but also ideological adversaries.

But exactly who was included in, and excluded from, this mobilized “nation”? Does it correspond to the differentiated nation conjured by a historiography, which holds that the “institutions of civil society...were far more numerous and influential” in the northern regions and Tuscany than in the rest of Italy?<sup>8</sup> And, if there is no such correspondence, what can explain the “deviation” from the model?

## I. The Italian Cities: National Pilgrimage

*I won't call him a Florentine. Go and visit the city where Dante was born in 1265, the same city that later exiled him....I will call him Italian. Go, and send your representatives to make the event more solemn, the centennial celebration of the one whose body reunited Italy's scattered limbs....I will call him Italian. Go, and by honoring the memory of the Highest Poet, who was a victim of civil strife, confirm with a new, moral unanimity the pact of Italy united under the constitutional scepter of King Victor Emmanuel II. Everyone who has some sparkle in their hearts will come from all places on this pilgrimage to Florence.<sup>9</sup>*

For more than a year prior to the festa, above all in its efforts at national fund-raising for the monument of Dante, the Florentine Centenary Commission made public the fact that all Italian municipalities had the responsibility to participate in the events of the Centenary. Each was obligated to take part in the “dutiful demonstration” (“doverosa dimostrazione”) not as divided bodies as in the time of the communes, but as a dignified unit. Dante, the Centenary Commission repeated, pertained not only to Florence,

the poet's native city, but also to all Italian municipalities. Under the "sacred" name Dante, the distinct municipalities would thereby affirm their oneness.<sup>10</sup> In order to highlight the political importance of the Centenary, such assertions insisted that one does not undergo the commemoration of national glories for useless or vain reasons, but so as to ensure, with vigor and force, the future of the nation.<sup>11</sup>

Despite these vague and general announcements, as late as February 1865, the Commission had not yet agreed on whether to invite all municipalities. It was not until March 30, 1865 that it made a decision on the scope and manner of the invitations. During its January 23, 1865, meeting, after debating whether this invitation was "to be extended to all municipalities or not" "(da doversi o no fare ai municipi"<sup>12</sup>), the commission determined to leave the verdict in the hands of the municipality of Florence, offering the recommendation that the municipality should take into consideration the fact that many Italian cities had contributed funds for the Dante Monument. Thus, the office of the Municipality of Florence decided to extend invitations to all Italian cities, as well as to other *corpi morali*. In a March 12 official announcement, publicized in printed media across Italy, the Gonfaloniere of Florence stated the following:

On that memorable occasion in which Italy will finally be able to honor the prophet of her unity, it is fitting that all of the municipalities, the universities, the lyceums and the main academies—in other words, all of the political, literary, scientific and artistic bodies that represent the nation—should also be represented by the festa.<sup>13</sup>

The circular also mentioned that the Commission was requesting that the representatives bring their respective flags to Florence.

This public announcement, which interpellated "all those political, literary, scientific and artistic bodies that represented the nation," proved too general and unclear. Indeed, it begged the question as to precisely who was really invited. In fact the archives do not suggest that there was any noticeable response from either Italian municipalities or other corporations. Aware of this, in its meeting of March 20, the Commission debated the exact manner in which it would extend invitations. Arguments were made for sending direct invitations to the cities, especially those that

had contributed to the monument. Yet the Commission eventually decided that such requests were unnecessary and that a general one sufficed.<sup>14</sup>

On March 30, 1865, little more than a month before the festa was to take place, the Gonfaloniere of Florence issued a second and final public notice, which in effect repeated the March 12 appeal.<sup>15</sup> This second circular did add one procedural detail: interested municipalities and *corpi morali* were asked to register the name and title of their representatives with the Centenary Commission throughout the month of April, by sending a letter to secretary of the commission, Guido Corsini. Corsini received more than 1400 such letters during the month.<sup>16</sup>

The decision to make the invitations in a public yet indirect form had a paradoxical effect on the issues of inclusion and exclusion, and it served as a key moment for the construction of subject-cities for the state. At one level the determination served as an inclusionary gesture by calling on all municipalities and civic associations “who represented the nation” to send individuals to the festa in Florence. On another level, it excluded those who did not identify or recognize themselves in the public interpellation. The mode of the invitation fell short of convincing many municipalities and institutions that in fact the circular petitioned “their” participation.

This point was brought to the attention of Guido Corsini in Piero Cilembrini’s letter, written from Montevarchi on April 21, 1865.<sup>17</sup> Without an “official letter or invitation” (“comunicazione o invito ufficiale”) Cilembrini had experienced difficulties “persuading” the Gonfaloniere of Montevarchi that the municipality and other *corpi morali* in that city were indeed invited to send representatives. The published program, and the public notices in the newspapers, did not provide Cilembrini enough “courage to persuade him” (“non m’è bastato l’animo persuaderlo”). Cilembrini wrote to Corsini in order to solicit a direct and authoritative confirmation that the presence of all Italian municipalities and *corpi morali*, “without exception,” had been requested:

Dearest Friend,

This Gonfaloniere whom I requested to nominate [someone] who would represent the municipalities, the lyceums and the technical



high schools of Montevarchi, answered me saying that he did not feel authorized to do so. The reason for this was that he hadn't received any official letter or invitation, and so he thought that the representatives of the towns' municipalities and of the high schools were not allowed to take part in the festa, or at least that they were not welcome there. With the program in my hand, I did not have enough courage to persuade him that no municipality or high school had been excluded. Thus, in order for me to have a little place at the festa, I must ask you to write me a line to assure me that the programs published in the *Gazzetta di Firenze* and in other newspapers meant to invite all the representatives of all Italian municipalities and of all high schools with no exceptions, and that all representatives sent by us will therefore be welcome as well. In this way I can show him your authoritative words.<sup>18</sup>

While the rhetoric of the festa organizers had emphasized the "duty" of all Italians to participate, by April rumors circulated that the involvement in the Centenary was an "honor" reserved for a privileged few, namely an "aristocracy of communes." Highlighting this perception, though intended as a correction, the *Rivista dei Comuni* published an article containing the extract of the minutes of the Congress of the mayors of Garfagnana, which approved of sending a collective representation to the festa.<sup>19</sup> The article mentioned that such participation was worthy of attention since it concerned those small and poor communes, ones demonstrating the most admirable spirit of cooperation. By dispatching envoys, the less prominent communes were asserting their "right" to be present at the festival:

...Even in the most remote corners of the mountains, the veneration of the Divine Poet is no less felt than in the larger, more civil centers...in this way all Italian towns could be represented at the Centenary celebration, without having this honor be restricted to the *aristocracy of the towns*.<sup>20</sup>

The piece suggested that, mostly, it was the peripheral municipalities and communes that felt excluded when they did not receive a direct invitation.<sup>21</sup> A quantitative analysis of the actual participation of the Italian municipalities in the festa, however, adds complexity to this perception. It draws a different picture of the geographical distribution of the participants: representation at

the Centenary, in fact, did not correlate directly to the size of the communes.

At first glimpse, it appears that the actual division at work here is a classically regional one, with its respective center, north, and south partitions. I will discuss the ideological nature of such divisions, as well as of the Italian historiography that insists upon them, below. Here, let me indicate that the *Giornale del Centenario* published a table indicating the final numbers and the geographical origin of all participating bodies in the festa, seven months after the fact.<sup>22</sup> Of the 543 municipalities were present at the Centenary, we note the following: 283 of these municipalities, roughly 52 percent, came from the central portions of the nation (Tuscany, Marche, and Umbria); 154, or about 28 percent, were from northern Italy (Piedmont, Liguria, Emilia Romagna, and Lombardy); and 106 or 20 percent, were from the southern regions (Sardinia, Sicily, and Campania).

Such a quantitative classification, however, can be misleading; it misses important points about the geographical participation within the Centenary, or the rationale of that participation. One can too comfortably arrive at the conclusion that the center and north identified more with the national celebration. A detailed comparison of individual regions supplies a more nuanced picture.

Emilia Romagna dominates the northern regions with 70 represented municipalities. This is easily explained: the city of Ravenna, where Dante entered into exile, competed with Florence as the true hometown of the poet. Of Lombardy's 61 municipalities, 35 were represented collectively in the Provincia di Como. A surprisingly low number represented Liguria with 9 municipalities and Piedmont with 14.

In the central regions, Tuscany overshadows others with 195 municipalities present. Thus, more than one-third of all municipalities present at the Centenary Festival came from Tuscany alone. The adjacent Marche and Umbria were represented by 88 municipalities.

The southern representation proved highly differentiated. 43 municipalities from Sicily and 50 from Campania (with the major city of Naples), while Sardinia was represented with 8. Such a presence is quite substantial; it is in fact remarkable considering that none of the southern regions had any municipal claim or link to

Dante. The picture of sizeable southern participation is clarified when we realize that Campania sent as many representatives as major northern regions, Piedmont and Liguria; and that Sicily's representation was more than double that of Piedmont.

The Piedmontese underrepresentation is striking, particularly the absence of the city of Turin, which at the time of the Centenary was in the process of being transformed into the ex-capital of the united Italy; yet it still housed most governmental agencies. While there was every attempt not to bring public attention to this absence—I have not found any mention of the point in either the publications of the Centenary Committee or the Tuscan newspapers—Turin's withdrawal from the “new plebiscite” nonetheless stood out. It was mentioned in the private correspondence of some of Tuscany's most prominent figures. On the evening of the May 14, Bettino Ricasoli, the architect of Tuscany's 1860 unification with Piedmont (who for unknown reasons did not attend the festa himself<sup>23</sup>), received a letter from his brother Vincenzo notifying him of, among other things, the events of the Centenary:<sup>24</sup>

The Festa was sublime and orderly, and it was almost overwhelming to see so many municipalities reunited here, as in a new plebiscite—the consequences will be enormous. I don't think I will leave before Wednesday, and I am happy I decided to stay. . . . Turin's municipality was not represented. Its province was, and so was its university.<sup>25</sup>

Now we glean a more subtle portrayal of the logic of municipal representation in this “national” festival. The 550 represented Italian municipalities that the Commission named again and again as proof of the truly national character of the event were not evenly divided. Yet, as mentioned above, the divisions cannot be reduced to a simplistic center/north/south hierarchy. Those areas whose cities claimed or competed for a direct link to Dante himself, such as Tuscany and Emilia Romagna, were the most heavily represented. The Marches and Umbria, the central regions adjacent to Tuscany, were next in this line. Southern regions, mainly Sicily and Campania, demonstrated far more enthusiasm for and identification with the Dante Centenary project than did the northern regions of Piedmont and Liguria.

Piedmont's resistance to the Centenary should be read not only in the context of its jealousy over losing the capital but also in the longstanding tense relationship between the Consorti and the Permanente, which had been exacerbated by the September Convention and the Massacre of Turin. Such resistance had even more concrete dimensions. When responding to the public call, and when registering representation within the Dante Centenary Committee, Italian municipalities effectively began a relationship of tutelage vis-à-vis Florence. Registration, in actuality, created a teacher/student effect, in which Florence dictated and choreographed the key symbolism: the physical representation of the body of the Italian nation. In addition to the names of representatives, the letters of registration contain a series of questions inquiring into the *forms* of participation in the festival. The participants wanted to know if the standards and flags were to be of a specific type (if yes, they asked, what type would that be); they inquired into what the representatives should wear—a uniform, a gown, or a black suit (*divisa, toga, or abito nero*); they asked if the various municipal mayors should don their mayoral emblems (*insegne sindacali*) or their tricolor sash (*fascia tricolore*); they requested information as to whether the *bandiera* should bear national colors, with the commune's coat of arms (*stemma del comune*), or with the municipal ensign with the coat of arms itself (*lo stendardo municipale collo stemma stesso*). Who should be carrying the flag? Should the flags be dispatched some days earlier, or should they accompany the representatives to Florence?<sup>26</sup>

In clarifying and responding to these questions, Florence was laying claim to a privileged position of pedagogical mediation, one situated between the various Italian social institutions and their collective representation: the Italian nation-state. It was this pedagogical relationship that Turin would not deign to enter.<sup>27</sup>

## II. Worker Societies: Mobilization

The mere fact that more than two hundred Italian Società Operaie (about half the total number in existence at the time and about four times as many as those who attended the National Congress of Worker Societies in 1864) were present at the Dante Centenary

in Florence is at first glance remarkable.<sup>28</sup> There are, however, several significant questions about the logic of this participation. The first concerns geographic determinants: Did regional identities play a role in determining worker society participation in the Centenary? The second turns on ideology: was ideology a determining factor in such participation?

A breakdown of the general list of worker societies establishes a geographical portrait similar to those of the municipalities discussed above. Tuscan societies overwhelm the list, with 114 organizations.<sup>29</sup> Twenty-six societies from the south<sup>30</sup> were represented as opposed to thirty-nine from the north.<sup>31</sup> However, the major southern regions, Campania with 18 associations, and Sicily with 8, far exceed those of the northern regions of Piedmont (7) and Liguria (3). Thirteen associations from Emilia Romagna were present. The representational asymmetry emerges as even more pronounced when we consider that southern worker societies developed later than those did in the north; and that, in 1865, the majority of Italian worker societies were from northern regions.<sup>32</sup>

This unexpected picture of relatively significant southern worker participation challenges the long-standing *meridionalismo*, which has characterized much of the historiography of southern Italy since unification. The findings also support a recent historiography of the Italian South, which has begun to correct this discourse.<sup>33</sup> The traditional focus on “the Southern problem” has grounded itself on hegemonic supporting notions such as the South’s lack of physical resources or, more frequently, its absence of civic spirit.<sup>34</sup> Parting from such premises, one recent political scientist suggests that northern Italy was characterized with a “prevalence of ‘horizontal’, Democratic types of association (such as choirs and mutual-aid societies),” and the south with ‘vertical’ networks of hierarchy and deference (embodied in the church and the *Mafia*).”<sup>35</sup>

The large number of worker societies from Sicily and Campania who traveled the long road to Florence to participate in this first civic and political rite of the nation clearly casts doubt on the above model on any “real” lack of southern civic or associative spirit. Demanded here is a general questioning of the historiographical “constructions” of the north/south difference.<sup>36</sup> A productive line

of inquiry—outside the scope of this study—would probe the reasons why the relatively few Piedmontese worker societies present at the Centenary enjoyed a privileged visibility. The Centenary Commission, in fact, considered including a long public “fraternal” letter, written by the Associazione degli operai di Novara (in Piedmont), and addressed to the Tuscan workers, in the ceremony of the allocation of financial aid to worker societies.<sup>37</sup>

The next issue concerns ideological determinants. The large number of worker societies that participated in the Centenary, including the Democratic/Republican *Fratellanza Artigiana*, points up the Florentine elite’s success in capturing the attention and imagination even of its opposing factions. An analysis of the ideological composition of the representative *Società di Mutuo Soccorso* must be situated within the context of the divisions among the societies themselves.<sup>38</sup>

The birth of the Worker Societies of Mutual Aid, “organized” at the national level, coincides with the unification of Italy in 1861.<sup>39</sup> Until then the societies, overwhelmingly Piedmontese, were structured under the patronage of the Moderate Liberals. The latter’s scope of concern was limited to the worker’s economical needs, such as insurance against illness, old age, and unemployment. The leadership of the Piedmontese groups in fact strongly resisted centralized national organization, as well as the introduction of national politics and political debates into these societies.

Prior to the IX National Congress of *Società Operaie*, which took place in Florence in 1861, the Moderate Piedmontese leadership had managed to resist the Mazzinian attempts at the unified organization and politicization of the societies. They had succeeded in keeping politics out of the agenda of the yearly Congresses. By and large, they had restricted the agenda of the meetings to precise worker themes, such as the “promotion of the moral and material well-being of the working class by means of instruction and mutual aid.”<sup>40</sup>

Politicization, or the “politicalità” of the worker societies, was the single most important internal controversy debated in the years following unification. The argument split the societies along two distinct ideological lines. Indeed, during the Florence Congress of 1861, the issue of whether the *Società Operaie* should concern themselves with “political” matters, that is, take political positions,

or whether they should limit their scope to ensuring the economic security and “moral education” of the workers, led to the first schism within the movement. It was the Democratic/Republican component of the Società, the *Fratellanza Artigiana d'Italia*, with its central seat within the organization in Florence that argued strongly for politicization. The Moderate societies, largely Piedmontese, opposed the idea fiercely, walking out on meetings. The polemics between the Moderates and the Mazzinians, at that point, reached an impasse, and the Congress stopped its summits until 1871. At the time of the Centenary, the Democratic/Moderate struggle for hegemony over the worker societies defined the Italian worker's movements.

A reading of the minutes of the Centenary Commission, and their correspondence with various worker societies, reveals the tense negotiations between the parties involved. It also explains the latter's compromised participation in the festa.

The cooperation of worker societies, in fact, involved a lengthy process of negotiation within the Centenary Commission, as well as between the organizers of the festa and the leaders of the Società Operaie. The original eight-day program had conceived of a public ceremony during the opening portions of the festa, during which the Italian Worker Societies would receive financial donations from the Gonfaloniere of Florence.

During the discussions over a revised program, Servadio, in line with his general defense of the earlier version, argued for “the need to link Dante's Centenary to all the other demonstrations of joy and to the proposed philanthropic works” (“la necessità di associare e di collegare alla festa dantesca tutte quelle altre dimostrazioni di gioia e le opere filantropiche proposte”<sup>41</sup>).

The rationale deployed by those who opposed the admission of this part of the program, in part, was grounded on a wish for the general censure of all activities not directly related to the figure of Dante.<sup>42</sup> More specifically, some members questioned the attitude of the Società Operaie and believed that they “do not have the initiative” (“non abbiano l'iniziativa”) to cooperate with the festa.<sup>43</sup> In response to this—realistic—reserve, other members of the Commission brought attention to the fact that the societies did not form an ideological block (were not ideologically homogeneous) and that the commission could certainly rely on the sympathies of

specific collectives (read, the Moderate groups). At the very least, it could be assured of their enthusiasm and participation.<sup>44</sup>

The key conviction of the Moderate Florentine organizers, namely, that they could count only on the participation of Moderate Società Operaie, proved erroneous. The Moderate Worker Societies indeed conveyed their enthusiasm for the Centenary; yet so too did the Democratic Fratellanza Artigiana d'Italia. These groups in fact deemed such participation as a right ("pieno diritto").

The case of the Fratellanza Artigiana of Livorno, the most radical of all the societies, illuminates the latter point. When the municipal leaders of Livorno refused to send any members of their Fratellanza Artigiana, the society wrote a letter to Francesco Guerrazzi, requesting that he represent the society at the Centenary. The letter reveals that the Fratellanza was not only willing to attend; they battled to ensure their presence:

Citizen,

A Worker is never ungrateful. He always remembers his offspring, whose minds ennobled this class of citizens, a class that is so useful, yet so despised by those whom a stroke of luck or an ancestral heritage have made forgetful of their origins. Citizen, we had the full right to represent our city at Dante's Centenary. Those who regulate the municipal matters thought otherwise, and subordinated doctrine and intelligence to three priors whose names were drawn at random, as if this was enough to represent the little wisdom we have in Livorno.<sup>45</sup>

In general, neither ideological identifications, nor simple regional factors, can explain the logic of worker society participation in the Centenary. The logic was far subtler and, as I shall show later—at least on the part of those societies who took active part in the Centenary—much negotiated.

A joint letter of ten Milanese worker societies addressing the Centenary Commission, which expresses their support for the "great event" (*grande avvenimento*), is a telling demonstration of the nuanced "reasons" as to why the working class "could not remain silent" on this occasion:

Dante!...This great name which resounds not only in Italy, but in the whole world; this extraordinary genius aroused such



worshipping enthusiasm that in this solemn celebration no class of citizens was indifferent or silent before the great event. In honoring her national poet, the new Italy is carrying out a duty toward the first man who dreamt about that unity which, after six centuries, we can almost say we have reached. This citizen, unwavering in his ideals of freedom and emancipation, led his life as an exile wandering from one land to another, but he never gave up his mission, always confident that he would eventually reach his final goal; and his divine poem is a proof of his gifted soul, which civil courage and exemplary virtues have made even stronger.

All governments and municipalities compete in this commemoration in order to give it a unique mark. The working class people could not remain silent before this national, or rather worldwide, demonstration. Therefore, they called a meeting in order to decide how to express their respectful affection toward the one who, through the magic of his writing, created life with an inextinguishable sparkle of freedom that survived so many centuries. As a result, they voted this act to attest their exultation.<sup>46</sup>

While the letter emphasizes the principle of duty in speaking about, and participating in the Centenary, as well as the obligation to honor the Dante who stood for the principles of “liberty and emancipation,” the essential thesis of the epistle contends that the working class must partake because, quite simply, it could not *not* do so. The logic is not really a logic at all, but acknowledgment of the momentum building around the Centenary. It reflects the fear of being excluded from that event. The “working class could not stay silent” while “governments and municipalities, all amalgamate” on such a unique and rare occasion.

### III. Worker Societies: Negotiation

If the worker societies felt compelled to present themselves at the Centenary, they also sought to negotiate the nature of their involvement. And, at least in this case, “winning the heart” of the society’s leaders was not a sufficient tactic and could not determine the form of participation.<sup>47</sup> The negotiations centered mostly on the issue of the allocation of funds to the Società di Mutuo Soccorso during the festa. The main controversies revolved around whether these allotments would take place publicly or privately: would the funds

be entrusted to the society leaders, to needy individual members, or to the social treasury of the societies? At stake in the negotiations was the traditional connection between *festa* and charity, which the above passage within Torrigiani's letter to Ricasoli highlights.

The Centenary Committee considered two modes for distributing monies, neither one of which was deemed acceptable by the various worker societies in Florence. Either the funds would be assigned to the leaders during a brief ceremony accompanied by musical bands;<sup>48</sup> or they would be allocated publicly during a similar ceremony to needy and poor individual members of the Società Operaie. The first of these options was dropped, most probably because it was not expedient.<sup>49</sup> The second possibility, which was communicated to the various societies, and was publicized officially on April 30, 1865,<sup>50</sup> provoked profound resistance and disdain on the part of the Florentine Worker Societies, and especially the Democratic Fratellanza Artigiana d'Italia.

On April 21, the central committee of that society wrote a letter addressed to Corsini, expressing the gravity of the matter at hand, as well as its objections to the proposed form of allocations. The letter begins by stating that the society had received a notice from the Dante Commission indicating the intention to give aid to worker societies. The document continues by emphasizing the "extremely serious importance of that communication" ("importanza gravissima di tale comunicazione"); it does not consider itself qualified to make any decisions without consulting all the chapters of the society. Nonetheless, the letter outlines the "most serious, though not all matters," as determined by the committee:

In fact, when you consider that our association is made up of about 3300 individuals who share the same rights and responsibilities, how can some of them be eligible for the grant and most of them be excluded from it? Won't the eligibility of some and the exclusion of others create some discontent? [...] And furthermore, how can one accept that those members who are recognized as the poorest and most deserving of the grant be forced to undergo the humiliation of publicly receiving the grant, not only before their families, but before a countless number of people? And what will the people think before the spectacle of these workers, whom terrible, yet unknown, misfortunes reduced to poverty, as they step forward to receive a grant, or rather, to beg for *charity*?

These are basically the most serious, yet not all of the considerations which brought this committee to our decision, a decision that, I am sure, you will find reasonable and of which you will want to inform the commission for the Dante Centenary [...].<sup>51</sup>

Resistance to this system of financial aid identified by Fratellanza Artigiana as “charity,” which would (1) create divisions among members who were equal in right and responsibility within the Society; (2) hinder social progress among workers; and (3) leave the public with an “extraordinary disgraced” image of the worker—such resistance, was not unique to the Democratic worker societies. The Società Mutuo Soccorso Tra gli Operai di Firenze sotto il patronato del Principe Umberto, wrote two letters addressing the same matter. One, dated April 21, was inquisitive and probing. It inquired as to whether the financial aid would profit the social treasury of the societies, or would be distributed to various individuals. The first option, it held, was preferable to the *Consiglio Dirigente* of the Society since it was “more in accordance to the laws that regulate it” (“più consentaneo agli statuti che la regolano”<sup>52</sup>). Also addressed was whether the distribution of aid would take place in a public or private forum.<sup>53</sup> Another epistle from the Society, of May 1, expressed harsh criticism of the system, indeed, found it unacceptable:

[The Society], in fact, finds that the decorum of the society and of its individual members might be damaged if the distribution of the grants themselves is carried out by different authorities than those which govern it. In addition, it does not agree with the manner and publicity of the distribution, which are not in accordance with the fundamental principles and goals of the society itself.<sup>54</sup>

Other worker societies repeated the disdain for the proposed arrangement of allocation. Generally, they found the public mode of distribution to disadvantaged individuals embarrassing, humiliating, and inconsistent with the regulations and principal mission of the worker societies. The Società di Mutuo Soccorso tra i Calzolari in Florence, with 80 members, found “that grant system [to be] embarrassing and humiliating at the same time” (“quel sistema di sussidi imbarazzante ed umiliante contemporaneamente”). The April 25 letter addressed to the commission reads:

The committee has therefore proposed to the commission that the grant which the latter intended to give to individual, deserving members, be instead given to the society as a whole, leaving it up to the committee to distribute it in accordance with the members' interests.<sup>55</sup>

Another worker society, Società Mutuo Soccorso Tipografica Fiorentina, indicates its resistance to attending the festa, noting that:

... since the grants will be distributed individually and publicly, our society finds itself in a very delicate position, because we would not know who, among our members, we should select to be eligible for it.<sup>56</sup>

It is important to emphasize that Italian worker societies in general, both radical and Moderate, did not consider as a problem the mere fact of sending representatives to the festa.<sup>57</sup> As I illustrated previously, they deemed such representation both a right and duty.<sup>58</sup> Only those societies that were to receive funds from the municipality expressed defiance and resistance: resistance to offerings that resembled charity or "alms" (*elemosina*). Of the Florentine worker societies, the Centenary Committee found the Republican Fratellanza Artigiana most rebellious. At one point, it considered substituting the allocation of funds with the bestowing of medals, the granting of honors.<sup>59</sup> Since we do not enjoy access to these internal discussions of the Centenary Committee, the details of such negotiations cannot be established with certainty. We know that by May 5, the Fratellanza Artigiana had arrived at a compromise with the Centenary Commission. It sent notice of the large number of members (148) who were to appear in the ceremony in Piazza Santa Croce,<sup>60</sup> and it informed the body that the funds would be distributed "according to the form of the statutes which governed" that society:

For the rest I refer to the content of my letter of last April, I agree with you that the sum which will be assigned to the Brotherhood by the commission for the Dante Centenary be distributed according to the form of the statutes which govern it, that is, in the form of charitable activities, as for example, dowries to sisters, grants to the pupils of our schools, etc.<sup>61</sup>

The negotiations concerning the manner of allocation of funds were, in effect, struggles over the specific mode of worker subjectivity that would be formed through the act of participation. The worker societies, like the other 1200 social bodies who recognized themselves as interpellated by the call of those who “represented the nation,” did not only insist on their right to be represented; they did so in the name of specific ideals that Dante had come to signify. In the case of the organized and politicized Florentine Worker Societies, the acceptance of “charity” would recall and reinforce the traditional patronage of the workers by the elite, which was anathema to a new subjectivity constructed on the basis of a modern class of citizens with rights and duties vis-à-vis the new state.

Indeed, while the portion of workers just discussed were the most numerous and politically relevant, there existed smaller, older, and more traditional mutual-aid societies that were perfectly willing to operate under the old paradigm of patronage, believing themselves entitled to the funds; these, in fact, wrote to gain the attention of the commission and to express their views.<sup>62</sup>

Altogether, 15,000 lire were allocated to the Florentine Mutual Aid Societies as follows:<sup>63</sup> Fratellanza Artigiana, 9,233 lire; Mutuo Soccorso tra gli Artisti di Musica, 879 lire; Mutuo Soccorso tra gli Orefici di Firenze, 302 lire; Mutuo Soccorso tra gli Ecclesiastici, 123 lire; Mutuo Soccorso tra i Calzolai, 219 lire; Mutuo Soccorso tra gli Operai di Firenze, 1,992 lire; Lavoranti della Tipografia Galileiana, 71 lire; Mutuo Soccorso tra i Manifatturieri dei Tabacchi, 294 lire; Mutuo Soccorso tra i Tipografia le Monnier, 137 lire; Mutuo Soccorso tra i Sarti, 549 lire; Mutuo Soccorso tra i Cappellai di Firenze, 195 lire.

In the end, on the afternoon of the last day of the festa, May 16, 1865, the Gonfaloniere of Florence allocated the funds publicly to the various societies. *La Festa di Dante* described the workers as appearing extremely orderly and “severely calm”; they quietly dispersed after the ceremony paying homage to “the King, to Italy, to Garibaldi” (“Re, all’Italia, a Garibaldi”<sup>64</sup>) (Figure 4.2).

The administration of the registration of the Worker Societies was yet another site in which organizers of the festa “inculcated” desired modes of subjectivity. While the Fratellanza Artigiana d’Italia had originally organized as a national institution, with its central committee in Florence, it did not appear as a unified body

at the festa ceremonies. Instead, it was divided into its respective provinces in the cortège, as well as at Piazza Santa Croce. This spatial dispersion, compelled by the festa organizers, undermined the society's existence as a national establishment. Moreover, the individual sections were not invited to coordinate and organize their participation in the festival by themselves, or in cooperation with other sectors, but vis-à-vis the Centenary Commission, with which they were forced to register.

Such an organizational format proved counterintuitive to various societies, resulting in mistakes. La Fratellanza Artigiana di Modigliana, for example, erroneously assumed that their representatives should appear with the Florentine Fratellanza Artigiana. To rectify the slippage Dolfi, the head of Florentine Fratellanza wrote a letter of explanation to Garzoni two days after the ceremony.<sup>65</sup>

Other societies, such as the Worker Society of Ferrara, penned a letter to the Centenary Commission stating that it was easier to coordinate their appearance with the Florentine component of the society.<sup>66</sup> Still others wrote directly to the Fratellanza Artigiana of Firenze, informing them of the number of representatives they were sending.<sup>67</sup>

#### IV. Schools as State Institutions: Charity and Merit

Fifty-one schools across the nation wrote to the Centenary commission, requesting participation and mailing the names of their representatives.<sup>68</sup> The Ministry of Public Education had authorized the day of the Dante Centenary to be a school holiday, so students and teachers from all over Italy could travel and attend the festa.<sup>69</sup> I have examined a sample of 44 of these schools, which form my sample space. Seventeen are from central regions, 12 from southern zones, and 15 from northern parts. Almost equal representation can be found in the north and south. As in the case of municipalities and the mutual-aid societies, the distinctions were made not on simple geographical but on more complex grounds. Sicily sent six schools, outnumbering Piedmont by threefold. Campania consigned as many as Piedmont. The overall figures are as follows: Piedmont, 2; Liguria, 2; Lombardy, 6; Emilia Romagna,

5; Tuscany, 13; Umbria, 3; Marche, 1; Abruzzi, 1; Campania, 2; Apulia, 1; Basilicata, 1; Sicily, 6; Sardinia, 1.

The Centenary Commission engaged in extensive and varied educational and scholastic outreach. Programs included the National Literary Competition, Lotteria Dantesca, Biblioteca Dantesca, and the establishment of an annual literary festa in the schools.<sup>70</sup> In addition, the festa invited initiatives from the local schools and universities. Ilaria Porciani argues that the establishment of educational competitions and awards constituted a true innovation within the Italian national festa. It played a double role: it exalted an institution essential to the process of nationalization; and it situated the middle-class value of merit in place of the old custom of *beneficenza*.<sup>71</sup>

An analysis of the discussion of the literary competition during the Dante Centenary both sheds light on and complicates Porciani's thesis. First, if the Centenary's interpellation of the educational sector in fact helped bring about a paradigm shift, it did so not only in the way in which it forged, through modes of inclusion, a specific state citizen-subjectivity; it did so as well because it permitted the state itself to enter into the festa. Second, the national festival did not "substitute" one mode of inclusion for another. Rather, it maintained the old custom of *beneficenza*, where and when it could, complementing it with a new mode.

As mentioned before, the winners of the national literary competition were to receive gold and silver medals, "less valuable for their material than for the effigy of the poet [on them]" ("meno commendevoli per la materia, che non per l'effigie del Poeta") during a festa ceremony. The medals were meant so that "the remembrance of national and domestic glory would be preserved within families and handed down from one generation to the next" ("si conserverebbe nelle famiglie e passerebbe di generazione in generazione ricordanza di gloria nazionale e casalinga"). In an audience with the king, the secretary of public education recommended state sponsorship of the competition since, by assuming such a role, the state would not only honor itself and the name of Dante, but specifically take advantage of an opportunity to enter the festa:

The fact that many people will take part in the competition would be a great honor for them, as well as for the Poet. By leaving to

others what it can do best, the state would deservedly enter the Festa, and in this way it would encourage education, something which interests or should interest everybody.<sup>72</sup>

Literary competitions, and the subsequent bestowing of medals, were not the only exchanges by means of which students came into contact with the state during the festival. In fact, the Centenary Commission approved of granting financial aid to poor families with students in public schools (concurrent with its approbation of assistance to poor individual members of worker societies). Indeed, a day after the public circular announced the financial aid to the Worker Societies in exchange for their appearance at the festa, the municipality of Florence issued a similar public notice concerning financial support of students.<sup>73</sup> The notice reads as follows:

On this solemn occasion to bestow a grant upon those *needy* families whose children attend Florence's public schools, so as to praise those parents who have their children's education at heart, and so that their commendable example will be followed by others...<sup>74</sup>

The aid was meant to encourage poor families who sought in education and work "the only lawful way to improve themselves morally and financially" ("il solo legittimo mezzo di migliorarsi moralmente and materialmente"<sup>75</sup>). Altogether, 11 Florentine schools received financial donations, totaling 6,698 lire from the City of Florence:<sup>76</sup> Scuola Normale Maschile, 14 lire; Scuole Pie, 128 lire; Scuole Serali, 414 lire; Scuole Elementari Comunalì, 676 lire; Scuole Elementari Demidoff, 844 lire; Scuole Superiori Normali Sperimentali per le Femmine, 92 lire; Scuole Normali per le Povere Fanciulle, 2,304 lire; Conservatorio di S. Francesco di Sales, 92 lire; Conservatorio di S. Pier Martire, 132 lire; Educatorio della SS. Concezione, 400 lire; Società degli Asili Infantili, 1600 lire.

Allocation of funds in the form of "charity" to families with children in public schools proved far less controversial than the furtherance to poor members of worker societies. The schools did not at all resist the offer. As the above chart indicates, financial donations were granted to public, private, and even religious Catholic schools. Scuole Pie, one such type of institution, wrote a



letter of acknowledgment to the Centenary Committee, thanking them for their “benevolent consideration, deigned to be shown in the distribution of grants, toward the Istituto delle Scuole Pie as well” (“la benevola considerazione che si è degnata avere anche per l’Istituto delle Scuole Pie nella collazione dei sussidi assegnati.”<sup>77</sup>). The names of the ten recipient families who were “notably poorer and more commendable for the good behavior and commitment of their children” (“notoriamente più povere, e come più commendevoli per la buona condotta e profitto dei figli”) was publicized in a list reported to the Centenary Committee.<sup>78</sup>

Evidently, the swing in the concept and value of charity was not uniform across different sectors of the society. The distinctions serve as indication of the forces responsible for this possible paradigm shift from *beneficienza* to merit. It is clear that the elite was not responsible for such a change. As noted, the Società Operaie found the public form of charity to poor individual workers unacceptable, inconsistent with the internal statute of their organizations as well as with the image of the working class that they were promoting. Organized as a social force, they negotiated the form and system of fund allocations and obtained relative control over the manner of their distribution. In the case of the poor (with school children), no such alteration in the concept of charity had taken place. Apart from organized workers, charity remained the only instrument through which the poor entered the social and political space of the modern national festa.

## V. Representation and Women

Borrowing a Durkheimian metaphor for her discussion of the marginal position of women at the Festa dello Statuto, Ilaria Porciani observes that “women cannot enter the sacred ground of the nation’s rituals: they are “profane,” and therefore excluded” (“dal recinto del sacro dei rituali della nazione le donne stanno fuori: sono ‘profane’ e dunque sono escluse”<sup>79</sup>). When women do appear during public rituals of the nation, Porciani continues, they play specific roles: either as “decorative” elegant ladies adding distinction to the festa; or as wives and mothers serving to represent the centrality of family as testimony to the equilibrium of the society and of the nation.<sup>80</sup>

The picture emerging in this study of Dante Centenary corroborates Porciani's, with qualifications that bring attention to the differences between the Piedmontese Festa dello Statuto and Dante Centenary. During the Centenary women were allocated a reserved section in Piazza S. Croce and were heavily present. But as we shall see, they did so mostly as relatives of the most distinguished male invitees. Before discussing the case of a specific woman, a poet whose story is emblematic of the pattern of female representation and participation in the Centenary, it is useful to offer a broader picture of the extent and nature of female participation in general.

Access to Piazza Santa Croce during the ceremony was extremely restricted, even for men with relatively sizable means and considerable connections. To obtain tickets, one was either invited, or wrote to members of the Centenary Commission requesting entrance. No one could enter the Piazza without an appropriate pass. The commission issued 16,000 tickets, since only this number of people could fit in the 50,000 square-foot piazza. Of these, 10,000 were white tickets issued to the Italian representatives who were to appear in formal attire (black tie) and participate in the cortège. One thousand yellow tickets were distributed. Yellow was the most prestigious color, reserved for the Court and highest state officials; a ticket of that color granted access to the center of Piazza Santa Croce. Another 1,000 red entrances were designated for seats for ladies and distinguished guests on the Via Benci side of the Piazza, on the one hand. Green entrances for the Borgo Santa Croce side, 3,000 in total, were reserved also for special guests.<sup>81</sup>

We know exactly to whom the latter 3,000 tickets were issued, for an itemized list exists. Six hundred seventy-five, or more than a fifth, were distributed to female spectators seated in the reserved seats in the southern side of the Piazza.<sup>82</sup> Of these, 40 tickets were assigned to foreign women residing in Florence; another 40 went to "Florentine women"; and the rest were granted to female relatives of various governmental deputies, council members, and high government officials.<sup>83</sup> Thus, there was significant female spectatorship at Piazza Santa Croce. In a monumental and oversized Giacomelli painting of the scene of the ceremony now in Palazzo Vecchio, women appear prominently in the foreground, actively engaged. They even overshadow the king and the Gonfaloniere of

Florence inside the Piazza S. Croce, a very different picture from the masculine militaristic image that Porciani paints of the Festa dello Statuto (Figure 4.1). A smaller watercolor representation of the ceremony now in communal archives of Florence foregrounds women, this time from a different perspective on the Piazza Santa Croce. (Figure 4.4).<sup>84</sup>

Even so, women mostly depended on the mediation of male family members in order to gain access to the Piazza. Those who did not have family members with strong connections who could procure tickets had to resort to other contacts. The archives contain about 50 such letters of request. The director of the Reale Scuola superiore per le femmine, for example, petitioned tickets for numerous foreign women. Another wrote to Cambray Digny, asking for two or three tickets in the platform reserved for women in Santa Croce.<sup>85</sup> Another wrote, “For the Festa at Piazza S. Croce, Enrico Guidotti would like to request two tickets for Elvina and Cainna Squilloni” (“Per la festa in Piazza di Santa Croce Enrico Guidotti prega per due posti per le ssre Elvina e Cainna Squilloni”<sup>86</sup>).

The case of the poetess Erminia Fusinato illustrates poignantly, the strict limits of this system of inclusion of women. Fusinato, a relatively accomplished and noted poet, and a Venetian refugee, lived in political exile in Florence. She had been commissioned by the Florentine municipality in the past to write poems; she enjoyed contacts with various literary figures of the period, including Righini, and the publisher Le Monnier.<sup>87</sup> Angry about the fact that she “was not wanted” at the festa, she refused to allow her poetry to be read by anybody else at the Literary Academy in the Hall of the Philharmonic Society on the morning of May 15. Ghivinnazi, writing to Corsini, relays Fusinato’s complaint, and obligingly takes her side:

Dear Guido, Rossi will not recite Fusinato’s poems, and she wrote to me saying that she doesn’t want anybody to recite them at all. A woman who has been excluded from the festa cannot be accepted into the Academy. If Fusinato had been a countess, she would have been invited—Fusinato is not a countess, and cannot allow anyone to read her poems. [...] Fusinato should not even have had to ask for tickets, and instead she was forced to. You all should have known that Fusinato is from Veneto, an exile from Veneto, and a poetess

who had been invited to write by the Municipality. Therefore, her poems shall not be read: I am sorry, but she is right.<sup>88</sup>

Fusinato was irritated not only because she was not invited to the ceremony at Piazza Santa Croce (and moreover, after having requested an invitation, she was refused). She was also irate about the *reason* for her exclusion. She observes that had she been a countess, she would have surely been invited. She was not excluded on the basis of a negative evaluation of her work; in fact, a man, Rossi, was to recite her poetry at the event. Nor was her exclusion grounded in politics. Indeed, her status as a Venetian political refugee would have made an invitation to her even more compelling. Rather, as she herself contended, she was barred from the Piazza because her social standing was not on par with the exalted standard set by the organizers. Fusinato's hypothesis was indeed warranted. In fact Maria Montemerli, a Contessa, did receive an invitation while residing in Paris, though she graciously excused herself.<sup>89</sup>

While poems by female poets were recited at the Literary Academy in the hall of the Philharmonic Society to an audience of official representatives and women, "a distinguished group of representatives and ladies" ("una eletta folla di rappresentanti e di signore"), the poetesses were asked to listen passively as men, serving as surrogates, recited their poetry publicly.<sup>90</sup> *Avvenire* described the verses of these women "as the flower of the fair sex intertwined with this garland of poems which Italy offered to her greatest poet" ("come il fiore dal gentil sesso intrecciato a questa ghirlanda di canti, che Italia offriva al più grande fra i suoi poeti"<sup>91</sup>). Such female presence at the academy did not alter an English journalist's characterization of the festa in general, and the Literary Academy in particular, as "Salique." In the paper *The Athenaeum* he remarks:

In the reserved arena of the Piazza not a woman was to be seen. At this Academy not a score of ladies were in the body of the room. A few, it is true, peeped in at the side-windows, and towards the close of the proceedings the antechamber was made uninhabitable by the irruption of a squadron of highly-dressed girls... apparently without a grave thought, or any interest in the scene passing within. This was not as it should be. What would Dante have been had not

his Beatrice stood at his side? And that the Florentines of our time know how to honor woman will be read for many a day to come in an inscription to draw tears from English eyes...<sup>92</sup>

Fusinato did not allow her poetry to be recited at the literary academy, but she found an alternative outlet where women recited poetry in their own voice: a private “Dante party” organized by Teresa Pulszki at her palace. The event at the Pulszkis’, in fact, eventually became part of the public record of the Centenary program. Pulszki, the wife of the Hungarian refugee Count Pulszki, the prominent activist of the Democratic and Masonic associations in Florence, opened the salon of her palace to distinguished Italian and foreign guests on the evening of May 14.<sup>93</sup> That evening, a statue of Dante and Beatrice served as a centerpiece around which various performances by women took place. This unofficial and private gathering, as mentioned, found a place in a detailed description of the sixteen important components of the program of the festa, published by the journal *La Gioventù* specifically as a testimonial to the events of the Centenary.<sup>94</sup> The only incident appearing in the descriptions of the festa, which was not part of the official program of the Centenary, is Section V, entitled strikingly “Accademia in Casa Pulszki.” The journal described in detail Fusinato’s recitation of the poetry of Gemma Donati, Madam Pulszki’s performance of *Armonium*, as well as performances by the Marchisio sisters.<sup>95</sup>

## VI. Political Refugees, Dissident Democratic Societies, and Masonic Lodges at the Festa

It is no accident that the wife of the Hungarian Count Pulszki held an alternative literary academy in her house, hosting the performance of a Venetian political refugee, who had been rejected by the Moderates in charge of the city. Since 1848, and especially after the Second War of Independence in 1859, cosmopolitan Florence had become a center of convergence for many patriotic exiles and European revolutionaries. The exiles gathered with progressive Italians in secret political organizations of the Left as well as of the Massoneria. Many of the political refugees and émigrés were from Hungary, Venice, and Rome, sites fighting against both the

Austrian occupation and the temporal power of the Pope. Count Pulszki found himself at the center of this milieu of refugees, Democrats and Masons, of these lay and radical dissidents who opposed the Moderate “oligarchy” in Florence, as well as in the rest of Italy, during the first postunification decade.<sup>96</sup>

In the summer of 1865, in a report to the Ministry of the Interior, the Questore of the Province of Florence compiled the names of the “politico-social and religious” societies who “agitated” the new capital.<sup>97</sup> The Questore’s report was to identify those socially and politically influential associations, other than the Moderate groups, who might play a role in the outcome of the first parliamentary elections since 1861. With the exception of the Associazione Repubblicana and the influential and pro-Catholic Associazione dei Paolotti, all of the named associations sent official representatives to the Dante Centenary.

In 1865, the associations of the Left corresponded ideologically with the two major Masonic lodges of Florence.<sup>98</sup> Those supporting a unified party of the Constitutional Left, which excluded political activities outside of the institution of parliamentary monarchy, by and large associated with the Masonic lodge Concordia. The radical Republican-Mazzinians, with relative conspiratorial tendencies, identified with and gathered in the “Progresso Sociale.”<sup>99</sup> Although not appearing in publicized documents of the Centenary Commission, the internal papers of the Masonic lodge of Concordia indicates that they dispatched an envoy to the festa and that they sponsored the publication of a “Dante Album” to benefit poor working families:

The feste for Dante’s sixth centenary were being celebrated in Florence. The Lodge decided to send one of its representatives there and, in accordance with its nature, began to organize charitable deeds. The Lodge’s circular letter which I cite below is referred to this: “on the occasion of Italy’s solemn celebration of Dante’s sixth Centenary, a society of honorable citizens, among whom are some of our members, had the noble and kind thought of publishing a work entitled *Album del Centenario di Dante*, the profits of which would benefit the Pia Casa di Lavoro of this city. The Rispettabile Loggia Concordia could not remain indifferent before this generous deed which aims at accomplishing a highly humanitarian purpose, helping a corporation which is based upon the fundamental

principles of modern civilization, the sanctity and dignity of work. Therefore, in its attempt to contribute with all its power to the success of such a noble deed, the Lodge decided to turn to the Rispettabili asking them to keep the copies of the poster advertising the subscription to the *Album del Centenario di Dante* on display, and asking all of the Fratelli Venerabili to keep the copies of the poster on display in the Sala dei Passi Perduti, so as to have them covered with signatures.”<sup>100</sup>

In addition to the above activities, the Concordia was present at the Centenary through a different vehicle, the “Associazione per la Tutela e lo Svolgimento dei Diritti Costituzionali,” whose *consiglio direttivo* was composed mostly of Masons. During 1864–1865, many of the “brothers” from Concordia joined this association of the legal parliamentary left, whose mission was to frame the activities of Italian Left into legal parliamentary institutions. The association, founded in 1864, and totaling 200 members by March 1865, exercised considerable power over the public life of the city.<sup>101</sup> The association wrote a letter to the Centenary Commission in April, expressing its intention to send representatives to the Dante Festa.<sup>102</sup>

The Associazione Democratica, another society through which the Left, Masonic lodges, and political associations congregated, was founded in 1864, with a clear and non-negotiable Republican and Mazzinian agenda.<sup>103</sup> This group sent envoys to the Dante Centenary as well.<sup>104</sup>

The Florentine Masonic lodges also contributed to the project of the Centenary by actively mobilizing support and gaining representation from Masonic lodges of other Italian cities. Two lodges from Sicily and from Lombardy forwarded representatives and, based on the recommendations and the example of the Florentine lodges, supported the Centenary publicly. In an undated letter, Rito Scozzese Antico ed Accettato di Brescia recognized that the Florentine Progresso Sociale had approved unanimously the sending of individuals to the festa:

They thank you for this big favor, and put their whole trust in all that you will say at the gathering, where that Great Man will be discussed; an examination of the *Divine Comedy*, in fact, clearly showed that Dante had been initiated to our secrets, and therefore

to all of the LL: MM. Please do not miss the opportunity to honor his memory in every way; with this credential they express their unconditional support and assure you that they will do all they can to approve all that you will say in favor of the Rito you are about to represent.<sup>105</sup>

The Fascio Romano of Palermo, a division of Rito Scozzese Antico e Accettato also heeded the urgings of the Florentine lodge, stating in a May 8 letter to “Dearest Brother, Antonino Guccione” (“Carissimo Fratello, Antonino Guccione”) of Florence that the society had unanimously determined that it “would not be the last to honor one of the most famous Architects of its Temple, whose name is today being celebrated in Italy. In its May 7 meeting it decided to send one of its representatives to the festa.” (“non dover essere l’ultima a tributare un dovuto onore ad uno dei più illustri Architetti del suo Tempio; di cui oggi Italia celebra il nome: nella seduta del 7 maggio ha deliberato mandare un suo rappresentante alla festa”<sup>106</sup>).

Still another organization of the Left, which expressed its intention to send representatives, albeit conditionally, was the Commissione Promotrice della Società dei Liberi Pensatori di Siena.<sup>107</sup> Although Mazzini had refused to take part in the Siena-based Italian organization on the grounds that espousing atheism would undermine “faith, religion, and law,”<sup>108</sup> the society enjoyed other high profile collaborators, such as Garibaldi, who was nominated as the honorary president of the society, and the Russian revolutionary anarchist Bakunin, who was staying in the house of Dolfi and Pulszki throughout the summer of 1865.<sup>109</sup> Due to its ideological positions, its uncompromising stance toward Rome, and the radical tendencies of promoters, the Questore of Florence kept a watchful eye over this society.<sup>110</sup> In a letter dated May 11, 1865, to the Dante Commission, the association expressed its intention of sending three representatives, including the founder of the Society, Francesco Cellessi. The letter qualified that the representatives would appear in the inauguration ceremony at Santa Croce, as well as at any other events, as long as these “did not lead to political or religious demonstrations which might contradict the Program of the Society” (“non dieno luogo a dimostrazioni Politiche o Religiose che potessero essere in contraddizione con il Programma della Società”<sup>111</sup>). In a different epistle, the Sienese



Association communicated a message from the Società Razionalista di Ginevra and the Razionalisti di Vienna, which expressed its admiration for Dante, “a poet who renovated European civilization” (“poeta rinnovatore della civilizzazione europea”<sup>112</sup>).

Other progressive associations writing to the Centenary Commission to send representatives to the festa included: the Comitato Centrale del Movimento dell’Abolizione della Pena di Morte,<sup>113</sup> the Associazione Unitaria Costituzionale,<sup>114</sup> the Società degli Amici dell’Istruzione Popolare,<sup>115</sup> the Circolo Popolare di Brescia,<sup>116</sup> the Associazione Giovanile of Naples,<sup>117</sup> the Comitato Politico dell’Emigrazione Veneto,<sup>118</sup> the Comitato Centrale per l’Emigrazione,<sup>119</sup> the Comitato Emigrazione di Pitigliano,<sup>120</sup> and the Associazione dell’Emigrazione Politica Romana a Firenze.<sup>121</sup> Predictably, there is no evidence of the participation of Catholic societies, such as the influential Associazione dei Paolotti in Florence,<sup>122</sup> in the festa.

## VII. The Distinguished Hundred

Various members of the Centenary Commission had brought attention to the fact that no banquet, in which “the most distinguished figures can gather in a friendly atmosphere” (“possono fraternamente convenire i più distinti personaggi”) had been proposed.<sup>123</sup> There was furthermore a realistic apprehension that the representatives of major Italian cities might perceive this negligence as disregard, and therefore be offended.<sup>124</sup> Yet, the commission found it difficult to decide on a location for such an event, as well as on the nature of the invitations. Some members argued that it was indecorous and problematic to extend special invitations “based partially on one or more of [a person’s] attributes” (“fatte parzialmente per una o più qualità di rappresentanze”<sup>125</sup>).

The commission rejected a proposal made by Casamorata, as an officer of the Direzione delle Strade Ferrate, to hold a ball in Casino Borghese in the name of the Commissione per la Festa Dantesca. It determined that the terms of the proposal were “too complicated.”<sup>126</sup> The proposal suggested a ball where only the members of Casino Borghese, and those representative who were not permanent residents of Florence, totaling 600 persons, could attend. The commission finally decided on a private dinner held

officially in honor of foreign guests, in the palace of Count Alfredo Serristori. Under the rubric of entertaining foreign guests/representatives, the commission hosted other distinguished Italians (130 in total) in this exclusive banquet. The invitation to the occasion, which took place during the last evening of the festa, reads:

On behalf of, and by request of, several Italians who are grateful to the famous foreigners who gathered to celebrate Dante's Centenary, the undersigned Committee invites you to the banquet which will take place on Wednesday, 17th of this month at 6:30 in the afternoon, at the Palazzo Serristori sui Renai. As you enter the hall, please present this invitation.<sup>127</sup>

In addition to the various illustrious Italians, including the king himself, the foreign guests mentioned by Barlow were members of the University of France; German, Russian, and Belgian representatives; men of the British newspaper *Morning Post*, as well as American guests.<sup>128</sup> Other names not mentioned by Barlow, but officially invited to be present at the festa, were Luzzatto as the Jewish representative, Arany as the Hungarian, Nascoe as the British, Lanostoviech as the Pole, and Dora d'Istova as the representative of France.<sup>129</sup> There were also five official foreign representatives who received a commemorative medal from the municipality of Florence: Alessandria of Egypt (Società Operaia Italiana), Switzerland and Norway (the consuls), Trieste (Comitato Nazionale), Istria (the Province), and Tunisia (Colonia Italiana).<sup>130</sup>

## VIII. Prominent Absentees

Two protagonists of Italian unification—Garibaldi and Ricasoli<sup>131</sup>—as well as a prominent cast of poets and literati were conspicuously absent from the festa. It is not clear whether Garibaldi absented himself, preoccupied as he was with military plans to attack Rome; or whether he was simply not invited. Suffice it to say, the Italian government was not very happy about the extremely warm reception he had received as the unequivocal hero of Italian unification in England the year before; his charisma and popularity had overshadowed that of the king himself. The

journals of the Left made much of this absence and demanded a clarification: Had Garibaldi been invited or not? Other commentators pointed to the fact that his presence at the Centenary would have had a disruptive effect since his allure would have taken honors away both from the king, as well as from Dante himself:

Where is he who more than any other carried out the purpose of the Prophet-poet? Where is he whose god-like voice and whose mighty arm joined together this long severed land, and made it one? Aye, Where is he who first proclaimed the King of Italy...? His thoughts alone reach the scene of this day's ceremony, he will not divide its honors with the King, nor will he diminish the devotion due to Dante. But our hearts yearn towards him, and many a gentle sigh at his self-denying absence is wafted, in spirit, to his island-home.<sup>132</sup>

Bettino Ricasoli was another notable absence. Conceivably, he chose not to attend. During the weeks prior to the Centenary he was concerned with arranging a secret trip to Rome; he managed to leave secretly during the evening before the festa.<sup>133</sup> One cannot know for sure why he chose this moment to abandon Florence. Perhaps he thought it expedient to slip away while the country was distracted by the festa. His correspondence reveals that Ricasoli, shortly preceding the event, was busy with matters quite unrelated to the festa.<sup>134</sup> He would have felt quite awkward had he attended, since he had been fighting against all notions of *Toscanità* and had viewed as disgraceful Florence's new position as a mere provisional capital.<sup>135</sup>

A cast of literary figures—Alessandro Manzoni, Niccolò Tommaseo, Aleardo Aleardi, Giosue Carducci, Giuseppe Verdi, and Gioacchino Rossini—also abstained from the Dante “referendum.”<sup>136</sup> These men of letters declined invitation to the festa and its Literary Academy not for political reasons but due to an artistic and intellectual reserve bordering on snobbery. For these cultural aristocrats, popularity rendered the festa vulgar. Manzoni, “humbled and obliged,” justified his absence to the Florentine Gonfaloniere, giving reasons of bad health.<sup>137</sup> Aleardi, who had been invited by the commission to write some verses accompanying the music composed for the festa, refused, citing that he was

already overwhelmed with other literary work. He adds, and not without pungent irony:

I should confess my instinctive and consistent repugnance for writing verses for music; Given my love for poetry, and knowing that the musical exigencies often reduce and diminish the Muse of poetry to its service, I have always avoided participation in what is, I would say, always a crude profanation...<sup>138</sup>

Tommaseò explained that his arguments on Dante were best presented in print, as they had been before. He thought that reading his argument aloud, “on such a solemn day, in the midst of such reciters and in front of such an audience, would not stand well in comparison” (“in giorno tanto solenne, in mezzo a tali dicitori, e dinanzi a tale uditorio, mal reggerebbero al paragone.”)<sup>139</sup> Carducci asked the Commission to cancel his name from the list of writers for the Accademia Dantesca; he found himself “absolutely impotent” in writing poetry on the awesome subject of Dante and his Centenary. Later, in a “confidential” letter to his friend Guido Corsini, he confessed that “(he) was both terrified by the name of Dante, and the idea of writing in verse, with which (he has) little familiarity” (“Mi ha spaventato il nome di Dante e l’idea propostami di scrivere in versi, co’quali ho ormai poca familiarità”).<sup>140</sup>

In fact, what scared away this literary elite from the Dante Centenary was not the awesome name or poetry of Dante; they had treated these subjects in scholarly media. They distanced themselves from the insolent and easy familiarity with which the Centenary and its numerous participants approached Dante. To them, this type of popularization—one thinks of the flood of popular poems in honor of Dante sent to the Centenary Commission—meant a degeneration of the highest forms of culture. Populating a public sphere, until then exclusively reserved to the few *cognoscenti*, the diverse Centenary participants laid claim to a Dante, truly their own, truly nationalized.

## IX. Conclusion

The findings concerning national participation in the festival of the Dante Centenary pose interesting historical problems that

demand response. They include: (1) the substantial presence of the southern municipalities and civic associations in the national festa conflicts with the conventional picture of the conditions drawn about the Italian Mezzogiorno; (2) the massive participation of Democratic societies including Masonic lodges and radical free-thinker societies, even though Democrats at large had asserted that no celebration of national unity should take place before the work of national unification was complete<sup>141</sup> (in fact, it seems as though on this occasion they deserted their hero, Garibaldi); and (3) the relative “overpresence” of women at the event as compared to the Festa dello Statuto.

One way of clarifying the presence of southern civic associations is by attributing to them an “early advantage,” one soon lost after unification. This seeming “advantage” has been discussed previously as a means to illustrate both the higher level of industrial employment and the lower level of infant mortality in the south (as compared to north and center) in the immediate years after the unification.<sup>142</sup> Yet another factor, the anti-Piedmontese and anti-centralization tendencies of the south, might prove a more salient, or at any rate, more historically compelling explanation for the above issues. These factors contribute to the divide between the “legal Italy” and the “real Italy,” a schism that has been cited as the impediment to southern identification with the young Italian nation-state, led by Piedmontese militaristic institutions. Yet the perception of this separation might have, paradoxically, just as well encouraged participation in an *alternative*, de facto rather than de jure “national” festa, albeit a Florentine one.

Also requiring explanation is the Democrats’ enthusiastic participation, even if dissident and radical. While Porciani’s study mentions the Democrats’ lack of enthusiasm for a national festa *prior* to full national unification, it does not provide a detailed or quantitative account of the real extent of the Left’s participation in the obligatory Festa dello Statuto. Again, the Centenary’s generally Democratic, anti-Piedmontese tendencies may well have served as inspiration, for certain sectors, to participate in the Centenary project. In fact, it can be surmised from the Leftist newspapers, that the Left found identification with the symbolism of the Centenary quite comfortable, above all with the name and figure of Dante.<sup>143</sup>

A festa that interpellated the populace with the pen rather than the sword, and that cast Dante rather than military institutions as its core, proved more suitable for women as well. The Festa dello Statuto's "parades in full-dress uniforms" ("spettacoli in alta uniforme") absolutely marginalized women to the sidewalks of the military parades and ceremonies. On the contrary, not only was there considerable female attendance in the Piazza Santa Croce, as well as a visible presence at the Academy—albeit as spectators; also, the Dante Centenary inspired unofficial artistic and literary performances by women, such as the ones at Teresa Pulszki's residence, readings so forceful that they managed to find their way into the public, official accounts.

The Dante Centenary was a festa in which most social and political groups located both something with which to identify and something to criticize indignantly. Virtually no group remained silent on the event. Attacks launched against the Centenary, however bitter, were still forms of participation, reflections of the way in which the festa had successfully mobilized the general public. Many newspapers, as proof of the strength of this convocation, began their commentary even *before* the festa. For the occasion of the festa, nearly all newspapers and journals, of a myriad of ideological persuasions, devoted extended articles to the affair. And around these publications arose a kind of "culture-war," as we shall now see.



## The New Civic Vanguard: The Press and Public Opinion

For the first time placed at the head of a civic procession, the Italian press emerged as a vanguard social and political institution during the Dante Festa. One hundred members of the press, “*illuminatori della pubblica opinione*” (as ironically dubbed by the oppositional *La Civiltà Cattolica*),<sup>1</sup> led the other Italian political and social bodies from Piazza Santo Spirito to Piazza Santa Croce, where the inauguration ceremony took place.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, while all other corporations, mutual aid societies, schools, academies, associations, and cities were aligned with their respective provinces, the representatives of the various Italian presses formed one unit, as if guiding the nation. The press, appearing as a national institution, transcended local and provincial identifications.

The actual condition of the Italian press did not match its image as projected by the festa.<sup>3</sup> Freedom of expression, granted with unification, was grounded on the Liberal notion that the free *concorrenza* of individuals, as well as the diffusion of ideas, would secure a “harmonious and orderly progress of the community” (“*armonico e ordinato progresso della collettività*”<sup>4</sup>). The task of the modern national press was to build an active political culture. Despite the law granting this liberty, censorship, arrests, and the watchful eye of the *Questura*, were the norm.<sup>5</sup> Regionalized and municipalized, journalism also suffered from a weak and uncritical “readership,” hence a fragile market, since 75 percent



of Italians were illiterate. Luigi Lodi, an early historian of Italian journalism holds that these organs with very limited readership functioned exclusively as instruments of political propaganda.<sup>6</sup> Without a sustainable audience, “political proselytism” was the *raison d’être* of Italian journalism in the postunification decade.<sup>7</sup> Newspapers and journals, vehicles of propaganda, sustained the interests of, and the polemics between, the various political factions.<sup>8</sup>

Contemporary figures, politicians, and journalists alike self-consciously recognized and commented on this matter: the dire condition of the Italian press. Gaspero Barbèra, for example, dubbed it “infantile” and “undisciplined.”<sup>9</sup> Ricasoli “trembled” at both the “ineptitude” and “malevolence” of the contemporary journalist.<sup>10</sup> Carlo Fenzi, editor of the organ of the Tuscan Moderate group, *La Nazione*, when describing to Bettino Ricasoli the affairs of the Centenary, and praising Florence’s great success as host, adds the following concerning the embarrassing status of Italian journalism:

Considering that the condition of periodicals in Italy is hardly satisfactory, it is necessary to find a remedy. In fact, if the situation continues in this way, besides making a meager impression before the rest of civilized Europe, our people will undergo a slow moral poisoning rather than receive a proper education.<sup>11</sup>

Regardless of whether it judged the press to be the agent of a “moral poisoning” or of the “proper education” of the populace, the ruling elite deployed the media as the privileged pedagogical instrument for the project of nationalizing Dante prior to and after the Centenary. The press, in fact, was turned into an integral component of the political rites developed for the national event. The press emerged as the institutional choice of the Dante Centenary Commission as the latter publicized the festa, horizontally, across the territory of the state; and vertically, among the popular classes. Friendly and oppositional ideological/political blocs, subsequently responded with a plethora of words to this public relations campaign. In effect, contemporary journals, reviews, newspapers, and satirical periodicals, commenting on the festa, carried out a “culture war” that crystallized around the event.

By November 1863, the Centenary Commission was well aware of the conflict between the Centenary as civic celebration and as national festa. The commission also knew of the advantages that it would garner were the festa legally endorsed through an act of Parliament, an endorsement which would have “a fundamental moral effect” (“un effetto morale importantissimo”<sup>12</sup>). It was aware as well of the very different benefits that would materialize if the festa sank popular roots, leading to a more organic event. Since Parliament refused to sanction, *de jure*, the Centenary as a national festival, the commission began a campaign promoting the Dante Centenary as the *de facto* *popular* national festa.

The opposition groups, the Catholics/Legitimists and the Democratic Left, did not sit quietly as the consorti undertook its promotional drive. They published extensive critical articles devoted both to the events of the Centenary, and to its “marketing.”

In fact, the Centenary took place during a period—Florence as capital—when Florence witnessed an unprecedented flowering of journalistic activities of all kinds: literary, historical, artistic, scientific, military, humorist, and, above all, political.<sup>13</sup> The question of cultural formation of the new Italians, the study of national history, and the transmission of tradition via a budding “civil society” were foremost in this journalistic agenda. Thus the controversial transfer of the capital from Turin to Florence provided the oppositional Left, as well as the Legitimists/Catholics, ample opportunity for subversion. In general, this Left viewed the transfer as an unholy compromise with the Vatican, as well as a governmental abandonment of Rome. These Democrats, therefore, perceived the celebration of any national event as premature. The acquisition of Rome and Venice for Italy was the essential condition, in their view, of any national accord.<sup>14</sup> The Legitimists, upon the arrival of Victor Emmanuel in Florence in 1865, continued with full force their devaluation of his kingdom. They missed no opportunity to undermine the municipality of Florence as the latter undertook efforts to make the relocation as smooth as possible. On some occasions, the attacks were directed at Piedmontese corruption in Florence; on others, at the incompetence of the men charged with leading the transfer. This then, is the context within which the contemporary journalistic coverage of the Dante Centenary took place.<sup>15</sup>

## I. The Consorti Channels: *Giornale del Centenario* and *La Festa di Dante*

*Since people know very little or nothing at all about it, I think that journalism should already begin to explain to them the responsibility and the importance of the festa and make them feel the desire and the zealous urge to take part in it.*<sup>16</sup>

In its initial meeting of February 1, 1864, the Centenary Commission made an important determination concerning the institutional means it would deploy in nationalizing Dante. Debating whether to submit the endeavor to Parliament,<sup>17</sup> it determined that the project was of “such a nature” that its development was best left to the course of public opinion:

After a brief discussion, the said proposals have been declared unacceptable by the Commission, which holds that they should not be presented before the Municipality, as they are of *such a nature that they best be left [...] to the development* of public opinion.<sup>18</sup>

The commission thereby decided to employ cultural productions, specifically the press and pamphlets, so as to “coax” that opinion. In the main, it put the pages of the Florentine *La Nazione*, implement of the Tuscan Consorti, to use. However, the commission also initiated the publication of two periodicals, the *Giornale del Centenario* and the *Festa Di Dante*. Both journals, directed by Secretary Corsini, were geared toward a *national* readership. They were created through private means, with the financial and political protection of the municipality and province of Florence.<sup>19</sup> Corsini explained the mission of the *Giornale del Centenario* in a 1863 manifesto:

The Commission elected by the Florentine Municipality, and the Municipality itself will make the appropriate preparations in the interest of the decorum of the city; *but their work will mainly concern Florence*. Yet, since Dante was, as Balbo said, *the most Italian* of the Italians, it is necessary to involve the whole of Italy in the project. Therefore there is no time [to lose]: a center should be established where all Italian cities can converge, a center where all Italian citizens with a will to work can express their vote; this

center should also serve as a constant stimulus for this honorable project, it should clarify doubts, settle controversies, promote what is most proper, most beautiful, most useful, and it should therefore be available and regarded as the *organ of public opinion*.<sup>20</sup>

Conceived as a supplement to the activities of the commission, and as the “center of correspondence” of all Italians, the trimonthly *Giornale* was published from February 1864 to June 1865, one month after the celebrations. A section devoted to official acts was employed as a forum to publicize the proceedings of the Centenary Commission and any authorized acts of Florence (or of other municipalities of the new nation-state). An unofficial component addressed material directly relevant to the preparations for the Centenary, as well as scholarly articles on Dante’s epoch, life, and work. The editor claimed that the *Giornale* would publish all qualified contributions since it should necessarily stand as a forum for the expression of the general populace.<sup>21</sup>

While one voice among many, the *Giornale* was the principal medium utilized by the organizers of the festa. The main objectives of the periodical included, first, the dissemination and circulation of the cult of Dante across the regions and cities of Italy; and second, the establishment of a strong association between the birthday of Dante and the festival of national unity. In Corsini’s “Manifesto,” the *Giornale* announced that all Italians had the sacred duty to share in the festa as a “necessary vindication of the past.” All Italians, indeed, should commemorate this event magnificently, since they were not only celebrating the birth of the greatest poet of the modern era, but also the fecund idea of the Italian Risorgimento, which Dante had proclaimed and defended:

This national event has already become a sacred duty for all Italians, whose hearts are already drawn towards this necessary revindication of the past; now more than ever they feel the need to solemnize it in the most splendid manner. And the most renowned cities of the Italian peninsula have already submitted several proposals, announced projects of celebrations, publications and events of all sorts to honor the memory of the Highest Educator of our homeland [...] Dante’s Centenary, when Italy will not only celebrate the birth of her highest poet, but the inspiring ideal of the

Italian Risorgimento, an ideal which he anticipated, proclaimed, supported and defended.<sup>22</sup>

Aware that the scholarly language, as well as the very expensive price (10 lire per issue) of the *Giornale del Centenario* would restrict its readership to the educated elite, the commission published *La Festa di Dante: Letture domenicali del popolo fiorentino*—eventually changing its subtitle to *Popolo Italiano*—so as to address and access a different public. Published from May 1864 to June 1865, the weekly *La Festa* cost a mere 5 centesimi; and it addressed the common Italian, the *popolano*, in simple and instructional language. In an introductory article entitled “Al popolo,” the editors announced the scope and the objectives of the ledger:

This brochure has been created for the people and its goal is to prepare them for the great festa in memory of Dante; we will begin issuing it this month because this was the month when the Divine Poet was born [...]. And so that the people understand what this is all about, we will begin by publishing a biography of Dante.<sup>23</sup>

*La Festa* prepared the “people” for the Centenary by examining numerous aspects of the person of Dante, above all, his ethics. In addition to articles specifically on the program and on those dedicated to the preparation for the festa, the journal attempted to create a popular cult of Dante, exploring topics that ranged from his name, portrait, commentators, ashes, house, virtues, the customs, legends, chronicles, and histories of his epoch, his benediction of Italy, the way he loved, his views on women, and so on.

The language of *La Festa* reflects the specific pedagogical intentions of the journal: to introduce Dante to the unsophisticated reader and to explain the cultural meanings of the festa in an informal and familiar, almost intimate, language. The same introductory article continues by dwelling upon the most basic matters, such as the literal meaning of the word “centenary”:

In May of 1865, in Florence, Dante’s Sixth Centenary will be celebrated, which means, the six hundred years after his birth. O people, Dante Alighieri loved his country with immense affection, and because of that affection he was exiled, his goods were confiscated, and his life was threatened [...]. Do you know what the cause of

all his misfortune was? It was civil strife, that which has always plagued the world, overturned freedom and fattened our enemies at our expense and shame [...]. Now that, at the cost of sacrifices and bloodshed, people have recovered most of their dignity and can finally demand respect and fear, it is our sacred duty to revindicate the greatest man, the most Italian of the Italians. This is why the Sixth Centenary festa is being prepared, and every Sunday we will publish for you, people, this brochure, which will be compiled by men *who are your true friends*. Dante was the prophet of Italian regeneration, and this prophet is your fellow citizen, oh Florentine people!<sup>24</sup>

As the “true friend of the people,” *La Festa* issued a series of articles entitled “La vita di Dante raccontata al popolo.” Addressing the reader with the intimate “tu,” the essays are striking for their familiar pitch. The first piece commences in colloquial Tuscan:

You heard the name of Dante a thousand times, but perhaps you don't know precisely when he was born, how long he lived, and what he did that was so noble and beautiful as to earn him the title of Divine Poet. Therefore I want to tell you, so that you can prepare for the national festa which will be celebrated in his honor, which is called the *Dante Centenary*. . . . His name alone is enough to give greatness to his nation, and during the days of dreadful slavery his name was like a lion's proud roar against foreign tyranny.<sup>25</sup>

Another series of articles, “Che cosa sia *La Divina Commedia*?,” initiated also in the first issue of the journal, opens with a preface demonstrating the intentions of the author, “Un toscano”:

Dear Director, your idea of creating a *Giornale del Centenario* was excellent, and so was your promise to add a weekly page for the people's benefit. Allowing the multitude to enjoy this fortunate national event will have very positive effects. In this way, the people will not worship Dante with blind idolatry, but rather will know the reasons why they should admire and be grateful to this great poet.

Therefore allow me too, as a son of the people, to contribute with my work to the people's education.<sup>26</sup>

Other components of the journal include the “Catechismo Dantesco,” wherein the main morals of the *Divine Comedy* were

presented. Also published was a series of fifteen “short, colloquial dialogues” (“dialoghetti popolari”) between the ignorant but inquisitive “Ciapo” and the learned and responsive “Vieri.”<sup>27</sup> “Dante e il Cavalcanti,” the first of these dialogues (located in the second issue), discloses their pedagogical tactics:

*Ciapo.* Since you went to school and are an expert in this, please tell me something. When they talk about Dante, they always mention some other name, as for example that of Guido Cavalcanti.

Who was this Guido?

*Vieri.* He was one of Dante’s best friends [...].<sup>28</sup>

The tutorial structure of such exchanges put the reader in the position of the inquiring yet subservient—because unschooled—Ciapo, serving in this way to convey a wide range of moral and cultural lessons. The subjects dealt with through this format were varied, as the titles of the writings suggest: “Dante e le donne fiorentine,” “Sui lussuriosi,” “Sui golosi,” “Sul monumento di Dante,” and “Delle Feste di Dante.”

*La Nazione* and the two periodicals just mentioned did not exhaust the efforts of the Consorzi in its drive to promote the festa. Individuals within the commission served as members on the editorial boards of several other journals of the period, such as *La Gioventù*, the *Letture di famiglia*, and *La Educatrice Italiana*. Targeting youth, women, and families, these periodicals thereby published extensive articles disseminating the ideological line of the Consorzi. On the subject of the Centenary, they espoused the notion that, via the festa, Italians were meeting a debt to Dante and also celebrating the fertile concept of a united Italy.

The ideological stance of *La Gioventù*, whose directorship included the most prominent members of the Tuscan Consorzi (Raffaello Lambruschini, Mariano Cellini, Cesare Cantù, Cesare Guasti, and Enrico Mayer), is best gleaned from a study of post-festa articles that offered reviews of the event. In the opening “Narrazione” of a special volume, “Feste Italiane nel VI anniversario secolare della nascita di Dante,”<sup>29</sup> the directors explain the purpose of their minutely detailed chronicle: “We have decided to leave a memory of these secular feste in these pages” (“Abbiamo voluto ora che di queste feste secolari rimanesse memoria in queste

pagine”<sup>30</sup>). Divided into sixteen sections, the article reports that Italians of every region who gathered in Florence for the occasion of the Centenary demonstrated their fraternal love, corroborating the vote for a united Italy.

The weekly journal *La Educatrice Italiana*, a journal devoted to instructing and educating women “italianamente,” published a post-Centenary commentary that mirrors *La Gioventù*. The article “Il Centenario di Dante,” too, portrays the Centenary as a debt paid to Dante by modern Italy.<sup>31</sup> Similar comments can be made of the *Lettture di Famiglia*, which published a poem “Dante e Beatrice” written by a “gentle and kind young lady, inspired by her love for our great poet” (“una gentile e cara giovinetta, ispirata dall’amore che nutre pel nostro grande Poeta”) in honor of the Centenary. The poem was followed by the descriptive essay by Corsini.<sup>32</sup>

Among other journals advocating the Commission’s conception of the Dante Centenary were *Il Pensiero Italiano: Giornale politico quotidiano*<sup>33</sup> and *Il Giornale Illustrato* of Florence.<sup>34</sup> The latter devoted an entire issue to the Centenary. The front page depicts a panorama of Rome under which appears a portrait of Dante considered at the time to be by Giotto. Included also are lithographic images of the temple of Dante in Ravenna and of the Dante Monument in Santa Croce, Delacroix’s painting *Dante All’Inferno*, the Stemma of Ravenna, the Family Stemma of Alighieri, and an extended family tree. *Il Giornale Illustrato* printed as well a complete copy of the festa program.

In addition to a sixty-page document, the *Guida ufficiale per le feste del Centenario*,<sup>35</sup> the municipality published cheaper versions of the program (which included numerous lithographic illustrations of the statue of Dante), so as to reach a wider audience.<sup>36</sup>

## II. An Exclusionary Farce: The Catholic and Reactionary Press

The assertion of the organizers of the festa, namely, that the Centenary was to be a solemn and popular occasion, which celebrated the unification of Italy for the first time, did not go unchallenged. Of the various criticisms, the most serious and frequent argued that the festa lacked legitimacy and honor. First, and despite



the organizers' repeated claims, the festa resembled an undignified bacchanal (this was the hardest blow for the Consorti itself had censored the first program on the grounds that it resembled a carnivalesque bacchanal!). The second contention suggested that the festa organizers falsified history, especially through the nonsensical assertions found among the body of epigraphs. Third, these critics maintained that the festa was not genuinely popular but, in fact, excluded the people, the "popolani." Such assaults were most forceful when emerging from the Granduchist/Legitimist and Catholic/pro-pope groups.<sup>37</sup>

One of the most comprehensive and harshest attacks on the Centenary emerged from the organ of the Legitimist Tuscan group, though under a Democratic front, *La Bandiera del Popolo*. In one of its first issues, the newspaper reprimanded the municipality of Florence for "its improvidence in squandering people's money on a political festa with no concrete benefit, in a time of poverty and of economic worries" ("la sua improvvidità nello scialacquo delle sostanze del popolo per una festa politica, che non ha in sè alcun vantaggio in momenti di penuria e di preoccupazioni economiche"<sup>38</sup>). The general disapproval of the wastefulness of the festa grew more pointed when, on May 14, the paper vigorously attacked the Centenary as a misconstrual of history and a misappropriation of Dante. The article "La Festa di Dante" reads:

If their intention was to celebrate Dante as the symbol of the supremacy of Italian poetry, they really chose a bad moment, during these times of prose and thieves. And if they thought that with the Dante Centenary they would symbolize Italian Unity after the fall of the Pope's temporal power, then after recent events they showed that they have no common sense. And even setting aside the indisputable and evident historical truth that Dante was never a Unitarian or a Mason Friar, despite the fact that they now try to pass him off as one, the festa is still a contradiction after the September CONVENTION [...]. If with the Centenary these boisterous people who lead us through thickets and shores intend to celebrate Dante's times, that is, the Republic of Florence, one starts to wonder how they can do it without loss and without making themselves ridiculous. They put Marinella in the piazza, but where are the Republican people? They raise the banner of the guilds, but where are the guilds? Contradictions in history, in politics, in timeliness. This is Dante's festa.<sup>39</sup>

*La Bandiera* charged that the organizers of the Centenary invoked symbolism and ideas that bore no relation to Dante's identity or aspirations. Even worse, such symbols were disconnected from the social and political reality of the festa, as well as from the present state of Italy. Thus, the paper took it upon itself to correct such misrepresentations in a follow-up article, "Cenni sulla vita di Dante per uso del popolo." Here, it provided "facts" about the life of Dante for the "use of the people."<sup>40</sup> The intentions of the piece were twofold. It wanted to arm people with objective data about the life of Dante, hence demystifying the constructed persona; and it sought to correct the misrepresentations, and by extension, the ideological premises of the organizers of the festa.

Upholding the banner of "the people," *La Bandiera del Popolo* continued its indignant aggression by pursuing the exclusionary nature of the festa:

It was prescribed that, at the *people's meeting* outside of the Uffizi, no one was to appear if they were not *decently attired*. Later, in a special announcement, Signor Digny by *motoproprio* let us know that, in order to be *proper*, it was necessary to wear a *staio* or *top hat*.... How can one promise a people's meeting and then set restrictions and chase the people away?<sup>41</sup>

Less obsessed, but no less severe, *La Civiltà Cattolica*, the principal organ of the Catholic Church and the pope, questioned the key intention of the Centenary.<sup>42</sup> That is, it undermined the association of Dante and the principles of Italian nationality *qua* unification under Victor Emmanuel:

These Italian "experts" are merely trying to sell the idea that Dante, a Catholic poet and man of letters whose heart was Florentine and republican, foresaw Italian Unity and the fall of the Pope's temporal power. The Dante Centenary is a *hybrid, pagan festa*, and a contradiction of his political and religious doctrines, a negation of the people's sentiment.<sup>43</sup>

Characterizing the Centenary as "hybrid" and "pagan," *La Civiltà Cattolica* then expands the scope of its commentary into issues of modernity, more specifically, into a particular "ritual" of modernity: the national festival. Describing the events of the first day of

the festa, the mocking review indicates that:

I won't talk about the vestiges and the traces of the republic; I won't talk about the false, anti-papal and generally barbaric inscriptions; I won't talk about the countless poles adorned with flags and large macaroni-shaped stripes; I won't talk about the knickknacks and the torches which are plastered on the walls of Florence. These are just accessories in a *National* festa which concentrates on the cult of *civilized* man and is completely extraneous to the religious citizen. The city is so full of ornaments, shrines, tricolor festoons, old junk, baldachins and small altars that you might mistake it for the Land of Plenty. The more the city is piled up with all kinds of different styles, the less it epitomizes "the noble style for which *we* have been honored." The people enjoyed only a small part of the festa, because the gonfaloniere closed all the streets that lead to piazza di Santa Croce, and only allowed them to sit on a small portion of the stands that crown it.<sup>44</sup>

This characterization of the Centenary as an exclusive, ornate spree seems even harsher than ones used to condemn the carnival in much earlier times. The festa, in addition to being unchristian, rowdy, and frivolous, is cast as ineffective in that it failed to reach the people.<sup>45</sup>

A similar clerical/reactionary paper, *La Vespa: Giornale Serio-faceto per Tutti* picked up the motif of the Dante Centenary as a "bacchanal."<sup>46</sup> Like other clerical/reactionary periodicals it questioned the very connection of Dante and unification, suggesting instead that the Centenary was an orgy that gathered together all questionable social characters: Lutherans, Jews, the Masonic lodges, and thieves.<sup>47</sup> The lengthy article "Il bacchanale dantesco" reads:

pamphlets here and there, written in the language of goslings, will teach the dumb people, by hook or by crook, that Dante Alighieri was the greatest poet in the world, and that Italian Unity was born out of him. This joke will be laughed at by the living, the dead, and the unborn. Because after all, Dante cared about unity like the Jews do about christening [...]. In other words, Dante and unity were like St. Anthony and the devil.<sup>48</sup>

Next, with patronizing language, the article scorns the festive crowd by depicting it as an ignorant child, deceived by the organizers,

one that gains nothing by participating in the Centenary:

And yet these asinine *festaioli*, who know very little or nothing at all about history, vex us with the Dante Centenary, turning him into a Masonic Friar [...]. If only they had done something good for the people, this festa could have been acceptable; but they already see themselves as Dante's knights and they only care about him [...]. I understand now why the rogues who govern us chose the Centenary to celebrate Italy's unity. Either with this festa, or with the next one, we'll get to Rome, it is just a question of one hundred years, people won't have to wait for long, and time will tell.<sup>49</sup>

*La Vespa's* depiction of the participants of the festa as "dumb people" ("popolo rintontito"), deceived by the even more ignorant organizers ("*asini festaioli*"), specifically discredited the image of the festa as "born spontaneously from the will of the people,"<sup>50</sup> put forth by the organizers and repeated in various publications.

The "people" appear in the weekly *La Vera Buona Novella: periodico della cristianità cattolica italiana* not so much as ignorant children, but as an apathetic crowd.<sup>51</sup> A long article "Feste in Firenze: per il Sesto Centenario di Dante,"<sup>52</sup> describes the collective as an "enormous crowd of noisy onlookers with a calm, cold [countenance]" ("*turba immensa di curiosi [con un contegno] calmo e freddo*") indifferently curious and puzzled by the "columns, statues, trophies, poles with multicolored flags, flowered patterns, drapes, inscriptions, big-headed busts, wreaths and various ornaments" ("*colonne, statue, trofei, antenne con bandiere di tutti i colori, fiorami, drappi, iscrizioni, testoni, corone ed ornamenti svariatiissimi*"). Their curiosity converts into genuine perplexity with the appearance of a Capuchin priest, carrying the tricolor banner of Italy:

...the effect that this unexpected spectacle produced in the masses is indescribable. Some were impressed in some way, and some in other ways, according to their various, contradictory dispositions. Yet, it is worth noting that he alone was drawing the most enthusiastic cheers from many of the people present.<sup>53</sup>

The confused public, the article observed, marveled at the epigraphs "scattered here and there" characterized by bad style, incoherence,

and most damaging, as reflecting newly sprung immature desires: “a little story of immature imagination” (“novelluccia della fantasia immatura”), distinguished by a “disbelief of the philosophy of history” (“incredulità della filosofia della storia”<sup>54</sup>).

Another reactionary periodical, *Firenze: Giornale Politico Quotidiano*,<sup>55</sup> criticized the organizers of the festa for turning Dante into a Christ figure—“but Dante had been crucified like Christ” (“epperò Dante gli era messo in croce come un cristo”). In addition, the journal complained that the organizers had unjustly exaggerated the evils of the last six hundred years of Italian history, that is, the “carelessness,” negligence, and oblivion “that went on from his time up to ours” (“che trascorsero da lui fino a noi”<sup>56</sup>). (It should be noted that, while part of this article is missing from the source I consulted, it opens by recounting 600 years of scholarly works on Dante.)

The section “Cronaca della città”<sup>57</sup> uses ironic anecdotes so as to charge the Centenary Commission, as well as its program, with a fanaticism bordering on the ridiculous, even on insanity. With biting satire it highlights the excessive enthusiasm of the festa by divulging the fact that the event coincided with the Festa di S. Bonifazio, the protector of the lunatics of Florence:

Tomorrow (May 14<sup>th</sup>), Dante’s Sixth Centenary will be celebrated. Fearing that Jupiter Pluvius might do one of his tricks, we consulted the almanac, to see whether it forecast some atmospheric variation. Thank God, Daccelli did not announce any trouble. However, what caught our sight was that May 14 is St. Boniface’s day, the patron saint of Florence’s asylum. Could it be that the Centenary festa is actually the *Lunatic’s Festa*? We are sorry for the Divine Poet, who despite himself will be forced to play the part which Victor Hugo assigned to *Quasimodo* in his novel *Notre Dame de Paris*! [...] When fanaticism exaggerates, it always degenerates into ridicule.<sup>58</sup>

In the cases where journals refrained from commenting on the festa, they deemed it necessary to explain their lack of enthusiasm, with a justification amounting to an assault.<sup>59</sup> For example, the weekly periodical *La Cronaca Settimanale Religiosa Politica e Morale. Giornale della Società Promotrice della Stampa*

*Cattolica Conservatrice d'Italia*,<sup>60</sup> explained its silence on the subject of the Centenary by indicating that the paper would publish articles on Dante only when the “revolutionary bacchanal” had concluded.<sup>61</sup>

Dante does not appear on our calendar, either as a Catholic, as a political figure, as an Italian or even as a Florentine. This is why we did not get excited about his festa, and we decided instead that we will publish some articles about him once the bacchanals of the revolution in his honor have ceased.<sup>62</sup>

Even the stubbornly mute *Cronaca* could not resist tossing out a few biting remarks at the Centenary. The caption “Il cadavere d'Italia” wittily turns a famous Victor Hugo phrase back on itself, thus managing to convey the very opposite message than the one presented by Hugo himself:

In the letter he wrote to the Municipality of Florence for the Dante Centenary, Victor Hugo said that, after six long centuries, Italy has just come out of her *tomb* today. I believe it, because the famous French writer judged her from her skeleton.<sup>63</sup>

The concerted and ongoing criticism of the Centenary circulated widely. In an article entitled “Le stragi di Firenze,”<sup>64</sup> the *Gazzetta del Popolo*<sup>65</sup> cast the denunciations as “false rumors” passing across Italy, feeding popular fantasies. As paraphrased by the *Gazzetta*, these rumors wrongly suggested that Florence was in disorder and in anarchy, and that the Florentines and Torinese were at each other’s throat:

Florence has other things to worry about. Florence is prey to anarchy and disorder. The Turinese people and the Florentine people have finally given vent to their thirst for brawling, and so they have brawled [...] The government ordered that the Centenary Feste be suspended, with the deep disappointment of Signor Guido Corsini; it also suspended the shipping of material from Turin, because who knows whether the capital will now be moved or not: it put Florence in a state of emergency, and now it is about to write to the Russian impresarios and ask them to sign up the bass singer Muravieffo on our behalf.<sup>66</sup>

The *Gazzetta* suggests that those responsible for this inattentive tittle-tattle were people bitter about the smooth transfer of the capital to Florence, ones who would prefer to perpetuate fraternal discord throughout Italy. The article conceded that the festa could have been better executed. It also highlights both the festa's "shameful waste" and the false papier-mâché heroes erected during the affair. But the essay ultimately redeems the festa by affirming its higher moral, political, and social principles:

But all of these external events, these contraptions and the celebrations which are being organized for the next two days, are surpassed by the generous, noble ideal which reunites many thousands of Italian citizens within the walls of one city [...]. Only one thing remains pure and honest in all its majesty, and that is the reverent homage which not only Italy but the whole of Europe pays to the highest Poet, who taught us how man wins eternal fame, and how the nations which are illuminated by the immortal light of civilization achieve immortality [...]. By celebrating Dante, we celebrate the triumph of freedom.<sup>67</sup>

### III. A Reserved Endorsement of the Festa: The Democratic/Left Press

While the Catholic/Legitimist press unequivocally rejected the principles of the Centenary put forth by the Tuscan Moderates, the response from the Left was more discriminating. The Left—constitutional as well as the radical Democrats who were critical of the government on many grounds—identified sufficiently with the symbolism of the festa so as to endorse it generally, even if with reservations. The position of the organ of the constitutional left *L'Avvenire* best testifies to this somewhat ambivalent support. The journal acknowledged Dante as "the precursor of our civilization," the "first apostle of independence and liberty in Italy," and the first to recognize the necessity of the separation of church and state. It also accepted that, by honoring Dante, Italians could redeem past centuries of discord. However, the Left viewed the festa as precipitous and as incomplete. The event was precipitous because Rome and Venice had not yet been liberated—they repeated the slogan "Your Rome still cries . . . and Venice languishes" ("La nostra Roma

piange ancora...e Venezia langue"); and it was incomplete due to a missing citizen, Garibaldi:

To be frank, our joy among so many brothers from all cities was not complete; one painful thought came to sadden it, the thought that, while an act of justice and gratefulness was being performed, perhaps another act, one of injustice and ungratefulness, was being done; among all those citizens, one citizen was missing, the one who inaugurated in Marsala the glorious flag with the motto: ONE ITALY AND VICTOR EMMANUEL.... Not by chance did we use the word "perhaps," because when we saw that the great writer Victor Hugo had been invited to the Dante festa, we rejoiced in thinking that Giuseppe Garibaldi would be invited, as well.<sup>68</sup>

*Il Temporale*, another organ of the constitutional Left, and a publication of the Masonic lodge Concordia, devoted its pages predominantly to attacks on Catholic institutions. On the occasion of the Centenary, the periodical was most concerned with the expropriation of Catholic lands and properties. It encouraged the municipal government of Florence to take aggressive measures so as to make available, through such expropriation, much needed space for the transfer of the government offices from Turin to Florence.<sup>69</sup>

*Il Temporale's* report, brief in comparison with that of *L'Avvenire*, was, however, selective in its choice of points to accent. And its choices are telling.<sup>70</sup> A blurb in the "Cronaca fiorentina" mentioned that the Province of Florence presented the king with a Dante souvenir, a sword engraved with the words "Dante to Italy's first king" ("Dante al primo Re d'Italia") on one side; and "Come to see your Rome cry; a lonely widow, calling out day and night; my Caesar, why don't you accompany me?" ("vieni a veder la tua Roma che piange; vedova, sola e di e notte chiama; Cesare mio perchè non m'accompagne?"), on the other. The suggestive rapier, it held, was meant as a provocation to arms, a call on the king to accompany, or rather lead the campaign for the liberation of Rome. The article mentioned only two protagonists, from the thousands present at the festa: the Società Emancipatrice di Napoli, and "the renowned Polish patriot Pulzski."

More radical than *L'Avvenire* and *Il Temporale*, the organ of the Democratic left *Lo Zenzero*<sup>71</sup> remained silent on the subject of



the festa, and only published the letter of Victor Hugo dedicated to Florence on the occasion of the Centenary.<sup>72</sup>

#### IV. Dante as an Ethical Model: “Dissident” Catholics and Protestants

The Protestant and Liberal Catholic stance toward the national festa is rather complicated. The first had supported the recent unification of Italy and benefited from the laws granting freedom of religion. However, as Ilaria Porciani observes, the Protestant journals did not explicitly comment on the national Festa dello Statuto in the early years after the unification. She explains this reserve by arguing that since many Protestants were also Democrats, they “could look at the Festa dello Statuto with poorly concealed indifference if not with presumptuousness” (“potevano guardare con malcelato disinteresse se non con sufficienza alla Festa dello Statuto”<sup>73</sup>). Protestants demonstrated a similar attitude toward the national festa of Dante, with one qualification. While they did not overtly remark upon the events of the Centenary, they did cast Dante as an ethical model, and did so enthusiastically.

*Eco della Verità: Giornale Religioso Settimanale*, the organ of the Evangelical Church of Italy, published material mostly on the subjects of morality, education, science, literature, and art. The biweekly devoted three issues to Dantesque subjects, publishing portions of the work of Ferdinando Piper, a Dante scholar from Berlin.<sup>74</sup> Here again, the journal refrained from explicitly political themes; it referred only to material relevant to Dante’s personal character, such as his moral and religious development.<sup>75</sup> Its writers contended that the characteristics, which the nineteenth century had attributed to Dante (Catholic, politician, socialist, and poet), “harmony of character” (“l’armonia di carattere”) and his love of “peace” (“pace”) defined him most accurately and justly. Alluding directly to the events of the Centenary, the journal regretted that the directors had chosen a Catholic priest, padre Giuliani, to give the inauguration speech.<sup>76</sup>

In the same issue in which this regret appears, under the rubric of “authenticity of tradition,”<sup>77</sup> and with the intent of underscoring its criticism of institutional Catholicism, the paper contrasted the Judaic and Roman transmissions of tradition with those of

Catholicism. While the former wisely guarantee “the original tradition or revelation of the truth” (“la primitiva tradizione, o rivelazione della verità”), “papism would have the absurd presumptuousness to compensate with a vague, uncertain ecclesiastical oral tradition, which results in a mere petition of principle” (“il papismo, assurdamamente, pretenderebbe supplire con una vaga ed incerta tradizione orale ecclesiastica, che si converte in una mera petizione di principio”).

Similarly concerned with ethical matters, the organ of Reform or Liberal Catholicism, *L'Esaminatore: periodico mensile inteso a promuovere la concordia fra la religione e lo stato*,<sup>78</sup> used the occasion of the Dante Centenary to explain and promote Dante's Catholicism. Thus, a lengthy article, “Dante esemplare e maestro al laicato cattolico italiano,” was dispensed free of charge to the general public.<sup>79</sup> Highlighting Dante's Catholicism, and the history of the censorship and prohibition of the *Divine Comedy* by the Catholic Church, the piece examines the following question: Could one profess Catholicism, while at the same time opposing those who monopolize the institutions of Catholicism?

How can a work be judged in so many different ways? Orthodox Catholics consider it merciless and scandalous; popes exalt it, and at the same time it is forbidden to the young clergy. . . . Let us therefore see in what way Dante was a Catholic; in other words, let us see if a man can declare himself a Catholic and at the same time be displeasing to those who almost monopolize the consolations of religion.<sup>80</sup>

Among other matters, the author contends that Dante's Catholic faith, as opposed to contemporary and established Catholic institutions, is compatible with the principles of nationalism, and serves as well as an ethical model for lay Catholics. He stresses a passage in the *Divine Comedy* in which St. Peter speaks of the corruption of the Church and alludes to the union of faith and reason. He then contrasts this “primitive” Catholicism, grounded in the reason of human nature, to that of the “corruption of the papacy, and of Christ's religion with it” (“corruzione del papato, e con esso della religione di Cristo”<sup>81</sup>). Finally, he cites the recent developments in Italy as the latest proof of the “goodness” of this human nature: “before now, Italy was never united and free, it

was never rightfully aware of her power and greatness [...]” (“non mai prima d’ora l’Italia fu una, mai libera, mai giustamente consapevole a sè d’essere potente e grande[.]”). Dante, the man, the Christian, and the theologian serves as “a model and master of lay Catholics,” revealing a moral path where reason and religion converge. Though he refrains from commentary on the program of the Centenary, he regards it as mostly frivolous and nostalgic indulgence. He encourages Florence as well as other cities to tend to the more substantial tasks facing Italy.<sup>82</sup>

Both groups, reform Catholics and Protestants, found in the Dante Centenary an opportunity to further strengthen their own ideological platform, using the Catholic Church and the pope as foils. A month after the Centenary, in June 1865, the director of *L’Esaminatore*, Giuseppe Pitrè, proposed to constitute a national association for the reform of the Church. Pitrè based his proposal on the thesis—one developed for the occasion of the Centenary—of the complete compatibility of Catholicism and Liberal/scientific humanism. The Protestants, as well, used the occasion to establish the moral advantage of their specific sects: the authenticity of the book and the “primitive” and unadulterated tradition were set off against the corrupt oral tradition of papal Christianity.

## V. Satirical Press: “It Was Better When It Was Worse”

An important sociopolitical and cultural event such as the Centenary could not avoid the barbs put forth by satirical journals such as the biweekly *La Chiacchiera*, *Giornale comico, satirico, critico, letterario con caricature*. *La Chiacchiera*, which appears in the shape of an old, toothless woman, dedicated an exclusive number to the festa, titled “Feste del Centonaio”<sup>83</sup> The opening scene of the issue, a depiction of the “Porticato degli Uffizii,” sets the stage for the *Chiacchiera*’s dramatization of the “FESTE DANTE-NNE” with sharp satirical scene:

The scene depicts the magnificent Porticato degli Uffizi all decorated with *knickknacks* of all colors—The sacred and the profane

are mingled: there are fountains, fresh and dried flowers and other trinkets, all tied to several green strings. . . . Nothing is missing from the decorative part, except the symbols of *Good Judgment* and *Common Sense*.<sup>84</sup>

One could conjecture that the journal's characterization of the Centenary as an extravagant, absurd, and unmeasured mixture of novelties was not taken lightly by the vigilant eyes of the questura. In the next issue, the journal therefore issued a disclaimer:

*La Chiacchiera* is a journal which likes laughter and jokes, therefore it also laughed and joked about some of the preparations for the Feste di Dante, but it did so in its usual way, that is, without offending anybody, respecting this high and solemn event. . . . Our readers will accept our position with a good sense of humor, because it is further proof of our honest principles and of our sincere resolution never to get involved with that part of journalism which works for our enemies!<sup>85</sup>

Despite the disclaimer, *La Chiacchiera's* criticism of the Centenary as a hybrid and modern festa gains precision when juxtaposed with its portrayals of other festivals that immediately followed the Centenary: the modern Festa dello Statuto (June 6), the Tiro Nazionale (June 18), and the traditional Corpus Domini and Festa di San Giovanni (June 24). The journal tamed its coverage of the first two "modern" events; its irony is subtler than that of the Centenary and, for that reason, possibly more biting. Thus the journal compares La Festa dello Statuto and Il Tiro Nazionale favorably, but only in jest, with the Feast of Corpus Domini:

Both the Festa dello Statuto and the Tiro Nazionale, which took place one right after the other, were very successful. Compare the cheerful faces of these two days with the jaundiced boredom on the ugly faces of the reactionaries at the procession for the Corpus Domini, and tell me who enjoyed themselves more: we among the musical bands or they among the hordes of hooded bawlers, with not even a fife or a drum [. . .]. The Sunday festa (Tiro Nazionale) is one of Italy's few appropriate feste [. . .]. How handsome those youths are, what a martial appearance, and how precise they shoot!

What a nice institution! ... shoot, shoot, kill, kill! [...] Let the facts change those silly, warped reactionaries, and on Sunday, at the distribution of the prizes, let them cheer along with *Chiacchiera*: long live those valiant marksmen; long live Italy the warrior; long live the warrior king!!<sup>86</sup>

But *La Chiacchiera* is not convinced! In the next issue, covering La Festa di San Giovanni, she recalls the beautiful lost festa with nostalgia and laments the diminishing popularity of San Giovanni.<sup>87</sup> She remembers with great longing the fireworks over Ponte alla Carraja, the great *corse dei barberi*, and the church services with the Eucharistic Guard:

What good is freedom when I am not free to let myself be killed by a racehorse? What good is unity if it considers the day of San Giovanni like any other day and I can no longer see the church services with the Eucharistic Guard? If the municipality doesn't restore things the way they were, I'll become a reactionary myself. True, now there is the Festa dello Statuto, which, though I do not know what to make of it, is actually a nice festa; the Dante Festa just took place, and now there is the Festa del Tiro Nazionale, and this year all of the glorious battles which were fought and won by our nation will be celebrated—all good things, I won't argue that, but the *Chocchi*, the *Fuochi* and above all the races no longer exist, and I protest, and passionately protest, because bastards should appear as well, if for no other reason than that the clerics were represented at the feste of the nation.<sup>88</sup>

Another humorous Florentine paper, *Il Fiammifero*, dedicated an illustrated three-page satirical poem to the Centenary, entitled "Sul Centenario di Dante"<sup>89</sup>:

Plebeians, always intoxicated with novelties/ Their brains empty and their souls shriveled/ Patching up their lives with ancient glo-ries/They are becoming wild...

And laurels and drapes and noble names/ Forced by fashion to become impostors/ Hang as decorations from those four peeling walls...

And thus: From the crowd of onlookers / Who understand nothing and gaspingly listens to everything/ Comes a shout, and the curtain falls: it's Dante! it's Dante!<sup>90</sup>

## VI. Foreign Press

The British had strongly identified with the cause of Italian nationalism,<sup>91</sup> as British Danteophiles expressed enthusiasm for the project of the Centenary. Yet the immediate context of the Centenary (the September Convention) impeded any unequivocal endorsement of the ideological line of festival promoters. The English paper *Cornhill Magazine* devoted an extensive essay to the occasion, which took place at the moment “when the national sentiment is offended by the negotiations entered into between the Pope and the Italian government.” The September Convention had caused dismay for the British, who had supported the cause of Italian unity, and independence from the pope and France:

The ceaseless war [Dante] waged against the Papacy in his poem... forms one of his chief titles to the gratitude of Italians; but it was ignored by the directors of the sixth centenary festival, who honored in him the father and prophet of Italian unity... [Dante was never a] prophet nor father of the present Italian unity, of which he never dreamed.<sup>92</sup>

Dante had been interpreted and labeled in many ways, the article continued. According to one’s political agenda, he was a Freemason and Lutheran, a Ghibelline and apostolic missionary, a Guelph, an orthodox Roman Catholic, and the Paul of Italian unity. The journal was no less critical of the latest depiction: the Centenary’s resurrection of Dante as a “Count Cavour,” that is, as the Piedmontese prime minister whose diplomacy was largely responsible for the monarchic unification of Italy.<sup>93</sup>

The British scholarly periodical *The Athenaeum*, the journal in which Barrow had first proposed (in January of 1859) a Dante Centenary,<sup>94</sup> published a comprehensive description of the affair in May 1865.<sup>95</sup> In addition to the typically British, ironic disdain for the lack of quality and taste in the artistic and musical events, the article applauded the Centenary for the “vivid and heart-cheering” impressions it left. Though the journal largely abstained from political analysis, it was the only account of the Centenary I found, which mentioned a “curious” absence of women from the public scenes of the festa, discussed earlier.

## VII. Anonymous Pamphlet: The Infernal Centenary

The harshest condemnation of the Centenary,<sup>96</sup> entitled *Il Sacrilegio A Dante*, addressed “al popolo Italiano,” is a little known, anonymous (the author’s initials are A.G.B.) pamphlet not mentioned in any of the bibliographies of publications on Dante or his Centenary.<sup>97</sup> The text begins with the epigraph, “Meminisse horret,” dread remembering. The author likens the act of remembering the festa to Dante’s recollection, in the opening pages of the *Divine Comedy*, of his journey into hell: an experience wrought with horror.<sup>98</sup> The Centenary Festa, the author holds, is sacrilegious. It drags Dante onto a scene he himself would have never deigned to enter:

O republicans, the Italian scene, which is highly unworthy of the first *Messiah* of Italian democracy because it is NOT Italy—it is merely *sorrow* and *brothel*—*diplomatically* arcane in half-light, had to veil the sincere, pure poetry of the Italian sun in the city that was most Italian for her heritage, history and instinct.<sup>99</sup>

Republican, antimonarchist and antipapal, the text is also a rhetorical exercise inundated with ironic references to Dantesque terminology and structures, one which wittily takes the reader on an infernal voyage to the Centenary: “You shall see the whole architecture of Dante’s *Inferno*. Let us name and examine the nine pits” (“Vedrai tutta l’architettura dell’Inferno dantesco. Enumera meco e studia le nove bolgie”<sup>100</sup>).

The opening sets the derisive tone, as the author posits Dante as simultaneously the son and father of the “Italian” faith: “On May 14, 1265, you gave birth to a son, who alone was your father, your master and your guide, recreating you in the baptism of Italian faith” (“Nel 14 maggio 1265 ti nasceva un figlio che, unico poi, ti fu padre, maestro e duce, ricreandoti nel battesimo della fede italiana”). In the first circle of hell, the reader finds the procession of representatives participating in the festa, “a *procession* on a baldachin and an eternal *Iliad* of *representatives*” (“una *processione* in baldacchino ed una eterna *iliade* di *rappresentanti*”), one corresponding to the infinite number of cowards who appear in

the opening of the *Divine Comedy*. The author places the standardbearer of the house of Savoy, King Victor Emmanuel, in the second circle of hell:

The new *issimo* of *gallantry*, who marked him in the *dictionary* of epithets, animates that festa, glorious as he is with his *brothel-like* heroism, sovereign citizen of the legislation of *pheasants* [...]. That banner was *worthily* presiding over the parade. In other words, the appendix meant: Dante was a Savoyard—he prophesied the proverbial *mustache* of Victor Emmanuel *Two*.<sup>101</sup> [...] Just Judgment! In that way you could have watched Dante *bow* before a *house* which enters literature with tropes and antonyms, and which in politics is type, the archetype and the prototype of Italy—no matter if it is an Italy of *brothels* or of *sorrow*.<sup>102</sup>

In the third circle of hell, the author places and considers the injustice of the Centenary toward Venice and Rome:<sup>103</sup>

The great train proceeds. —Almost at the end come the flags of Rome and Venice.... Bound together or imploring at the feet of that king who signed the September 15 Convention, who left us with the Syllabus of Errors in force; with panderism—Vegezzi humbly signs a treaty of peace and brotherhood with the Pope; [...] Rome and Venice gang up with an armed Tanacca, whose program includes the neglect of Venice, the abandonment of Rome, hard slavery under France in parricide, the secular infamy of the Italian peninsula.... Fellow people! Do you believe now the sacrilege which was committed on the Dante Centenary—the profanation which took place on his immortal grave, that heresy against the highest and most mysterious dogma which Italy received through and from him—honor, emancipation, humanity? He who cried his native scorn for Rome, in Rome created, among his sighs, those sublime verses....<sup>104</sup>

In the remaining circles, he places all the sinful and lost souls, “perduta gente,” who find themselves in Piazza Santa Croce for the Centenary: Liberal representatives, avaricious deputies, envious musicians, jealous singers, thieving politicians, jurors and perjurers of the court, and finally, the privileged plebe, “plebe de’ privilegiati.” The scene in the Piazza is suddenly interrupted by music, as Dante and the rest of the dead are resurrected: “because even the



Inferno itself was moved by that festa!" ("poiché anco l'Inferno era commosso a quella festa!"<sup>105</sup>). The author then thrusts aside those sinful souls whose profane presence contaminates the sacred space of Santa Croce:

You heathens! Why did you come to bargain in our immaculate temple? This is Italy's sanctuary, so go elsewhere to look for the synagogues of your asses, of your pompously shameful orgies; take your thurible and your incense elsewhere. Here is God and not an idol, here was an angel of life, not Baal or Jehovah. The house of the god of progress shall not be reached by the false, sacrilegious contamination of gold. Here republican virtue was a constant inspiration.... A crown, a tiara: incense and aspergillums are profane in this temple because we separated from all of those adulterous unions which marry the Church's tyranny to the Monarchs' lust.... Go away, heathens.<sup>106</sup>

The Dante Centenary is the celebration of Italian slavery; participation in the Centenary, therefore, is the autocelebration of such slavery. The future, to the contrary, holds delivery with revolution.<sup>107</sup> The author pleads that each Italian escape from the profanity of the Centenary.

At least you must flee from such profanity. —You, the only pure one who saved yourself for the centenary of the future. And you did well by fleeing that day, remaining faithful to honest and free religion, and after three days you sang the *hymn* of the revolution, saluting Mazzini and Garibaldi, and you voted, on Dante's monument, for a cult of the homeland, of progress and of humanity.<sup>108</sup>

## VIII. Conclusion

If the Italian critics and scholars of French revolutionary and Napoleonic era had planted the idea of a link between Dante and Italian nationalism,<sup>109</sup> the journalistic efforts of the Centenary Commission nurtured, amplified, and popularized the notion in an unprecedented manner. They did so not only by appealing to, but by producing "public opinion." With its supplications, the Centenary unleashed powerful symbolism into the public sphere, cultural material that was then appropriated by various social

groups for their own agenda. Each organization used the icons summoned by the Centenary Commission to write and rewrite history and to act out in a public struggle, the questions concerning the identity of the new nation-state.

The Tuscan organizers wrote the story of the Centenary as a parable of the Florentine son who fathered the Italian nation as well as King Victor Emmanuel himself. Such a tale ensured both the Moderate hegemony and Tuscany's privileged position. For the Democrats, the Centenary was yet another occasion to bring attention to their vision of unification as incomplete. The main assertion of the Moderates, to wit, that the Centenary was a joining together of *all* Italians, allowed the Democrats to render even more conspicuous the absence of Rome and Venice, and the man who stood for them, Garibaldi.

The Catholic opposition used the symbolic material of the Centenary to underwrite their vision of modernity as corrupt, vacuous, and as essentially false, furthering the enumerations of the 1864 papal syllabus of errors. The Church specifically admonished against journalism and the journalist, as the modern political rite and the protagonists of the Centenary respectively.<sup>110</sup> The Protestants and Liberal Catholics deployed the most salient icons of the Centenary, Dante and the *Divine Comedy*, to solicit an ethical or religious renovation independent of the Catholic Church.

What concerns us here is not whether the popularized images and activities of the Centenary were inherently Liberal or conservative: pro-Catholic, pro-Moderate, or Democratic. Rather, we want to bring attention to the fact that such cultural images and symbols, when popularized, assumed a powerful role because they came to construct the collective imagination. The specific meaning of the festival could range from national regeneration to cultural degeneration depending on shifts in context.



## Conclusion

### Flood of Words: Counting and Un-Counting the Risorgimento Archives

The history of Dante Centenary supports, but also complicates, the historiographical literature on the commemorative politics of the postunification Italy. Bruno Tobia has identified the dialectic of modernity and tradition as one of the three characteristics of commemorative politics of the period. The need to ground the Moderate Liberal regime in a founding myth, as well as present it as a radical break from the past, was indeed operative at the Centenary. I have added that this dialectic, specifically its positivist component, presented particular *social* consequences.

A second theme of the literature on the commemorative politics of postunification Italy concerns the efficacy of the available symbolic repertoire and cultural material: Catholic liturgy, Rome, and monarchy. Pointing to the limits of the effectiveness of national commemorative practices, scholars have suggested that, during the 1860s, only Catholic liturgy could mobilize and unite Italians across the peninsula. Furthermore, after the completion of unification in 1871, only Rome and the monarchy could stand as possible centers, symbolically unify the nation and overcome local or particularistic interests. The tremendous success of an 1860s national festa, which had at its center the figure of visionary poet, and which underwrote municipal status, is striking in this historiographical context. In previous pages I have suggested that a successful negotiation with the “other” of these discourses—(1) Dante as Catholic, but also as anti-papal; (2) valorization of local traditions, but as contributing to the nation; and (3) centrality of the

figure of the monarch, but not of his home-base Piedmont—could in 1865 yield an alternative articulation of Italian unity.

A third characteristic of commemorative practices, in the Italian context, has rightly been identified as the attempt to reduce the possible effects of the Garibaldian and Mazzinian legacies. We have seen that this politics was certainly operative at the Centenary. Furthermore, the Centenary organizers had the advantage of a recent political lesson, namely, the radicalizing dangers of a festival in honor of a national poet: the 1864 Shakespeare festival in England had been politicized and used by English radicals to further their reform agendas.<sup>1</sup> This, as well as the fact that the platform of Shakespeare Tercentenary in England had been used for the massive demonstrations of radicals, who protested against the expulsion of Garibaldi from the country, could not have escaped the attention of the Tuscan organizers.

Yet, the history of the 1865, Dante Centenary not only belongs to the Italian commemorative context, but also to a European-wide phenomenon of nineteenth-century national celebrations. As such, it is inexorably linked to a theoretical movement within historiography. Jacques Rancière has addressed the issue in an interesting fashion through a discussion of Michelet's narrative of the Festival of Unity, which celebrated the emergence of the French nation.

To make possible a history of the age of the masses, we must first speak of that event of a crowd assembled to celebrate the appearance of an incarnated abstraction (the nation)... How do we recount this event so that it does not simply figure the void of ideology that is substituted for the void of royal power?<sup>2</sup>

Rancière here is referring to a theoretical moment that puts the givenness of subjects of history into question. Recent cultural theory demands that historians not take social identities and class interests as given, but consider the ways in which they emerge through discursive practices, so that one not fall into the "void of ideology" to which Rancière, in the above citation, alludes. Yet, in writing the narrative of a nation, or a national festival, a historian must name actors and subjects. How to tell a story without assuming as given social agents and actors—the French people, or the Tuscan elite—with predetermined identities and interests? After

all, cultural historians have established as ideological, and have already deconstructed the unity of, any of these social groupings.

I dealt with this theoretical problem methodologically, writing a thick description, which addressed the four interrelated topics that shape the historiography of the Risorgimento: center/periphery and national/local relationships; the schism between parliament and civil society; the modernity vs. tradition dynamic; and the questions of inclusion in, and exclusion from, the body politic. These issues are inexorably linked within the sphere of the Dante Festa. The significance of the occasion itself emerges only through an understanding of the ways in which the Tuscan organizers addressed these interconnected topics. From the Florentine municipality, the elite conducted a national campaign that endorsed the myth of Dante as the father of Italian unity, utilizing the institutions of civil society rather than the official sphere of parliament. In doing so, they not only elevated the status of the local, specifically that of the municipality, but also surfaced as the primogenitors of civic associations at the national level.

My method emerged as an improvised attempt to give meaning, order, and structure to the mass of archival material that I happened upon in the communal archive of Florence. Thirteen voluminous buste, each containing hundreds of mostly random documents, some of them official, have survived in the same condition and order left by the Dante Festa Organizers in 1865. The sheer existence of the mass of material in the archive gave rise to matters that did not neatly fit into the standard debates about the Risorgimento, but which conjure Rancière's announcement of a central problem of writing a history in the age of the masses: the copious and disordered documents of the anonymous masses, to which Rancière refers as the "excess of words."<sup>3</sup> The sheer quantity of the Florentine material itself, and the way in which it was conserved by the original organizers, seemed significant. The Centenary archives contained an "excess of words," an excess that, I suspected, had something to say about the construction of the Italian national narrative.

The eventual decision of the Centenary organizers to dispatch a public call to all those who "represented the Italian nation" was responsible, as we have seen, for the massive quantity of epistles that poured into Florence from Italy and abroad. The commission

treated the flood of paperwork that come its way in two different fashions dealt with in [chapters 2](#) and [4](#) of this study. With the 1200 letters of registration, the “participants” were numbered and catalogued as legitimate representatives at the festa and of the nation. The remainder, stored and never publicized, are stored today in no particular sequence, dusty, untouched, and nearly unseen.

These manners of archiving the material bear witness to two components of nation formation. The Centenary, as part of its effort to forge the nation, first divided Italy—whose whole again, could at the time only be imagined—into a series of sectors within a hierarchy. This count of divisions, one set off from the other, was a way of accounting for the nation as an (otherwise inconceivable) single order. The numbered letters served as tools in the construction of the nation as a structured society or a liberal order. The Festa organizers, equating the participants with the legitimate representatives of the nation, constructed a totality by containing and also failing to contain all the letters that poured into Florence. Corsini struggles to include them in so many lists, within so many categories, versions, orders, hierarchies, and programs. The numbered letters served as means to inventory the representative civic institutions of Italian society, to accord them a legitimacy that was derived from the spheres of civil society rather than from the Parliament, which for many did not represent the people. The categorization process permitted the Commission, and by extension Florence, to emerge as the agent endowed with the right to draw the map of a viable and “representative” Italian body politic.

Yet, the archives contain missives and objects that went uncategorized. One finds there poems, curiosities, and cards that were never catalogued, were most likely never read or interpreted, and certainly enjoyed no visibility at the festa. These memoranda, uncounted, emitted from individuals who did not count, in forms that did not count: tokens, paper scraps, anonymous proposals, drafts of notes, memos, tickets, partial lists, medallions, business cards, hand-written and hand-decorated pamphlets held together with colorful ribbons, and of course, the copious doggerel, singing to the nation. These represent the nation as spirit, the national soul that cannot be counted as one of the sectors that make up the concrete body. They transcend the divisions that rendered the

total count possible, indeed, transcend division itself. These abject documents, love letters to Italy, function as “silent witnesses”<sup>4</sup> to the sheer presence of the nation. They are silent, because, for the contemporary historians, as for the Festa organizers, most important is not what the mass of letters and poem sent to the Centenary commission say—the content of the love cannot be put to words—but only that they are present: that the nation, the people, is.

These documents in their abject state, even given the interpellation process I described previously, were unsolicited. They arrived as if too eager, as if speaking out of turn. They ask that their zeal be forgiven. They are at times self-conscious about their own excess. They are the excess of the excessive quantity of popular poetry that was written in the name of or to Dante, published in 1865.

The communiqués of anonymous individuals have not yielded to any proper account or accounting for they do not fit into the story of the nation that the Commission wanted to convey. This is the narrative of a society ordered into parts, with its center in Florence. Nonetheless the Commission stored the documents. They are archived not as the writings of subjects, with specific content, but as the voice of an anonymous, boisterous mass. Their collective drone announces nothing but a presence, like unruly children about whose words we know nothing except that they are there. Within the groundwork of the nation lies a “people” qua nation that is not one of the groups that are representative of Italy, or that—like an institution of civil society—play a role in the state, but that nevertheless must be preserved. The numbered archives represent the counted parts of a new tangible Italy. The excess documents, represent the territory as an undivided whole, as spirit. The festa was an Italian festa because it constructed these two elements of the nation.

No doubt this explains why Corsini preserved the scraps, even if he could not fit them into a category or social division. The words themselves are of no use for they represent the excess of words that form, as it were, the spine of the extant book of the festa program, the buzz that forms the background of the words—and organizations—that enter the actual historical narrative. The truth of the Italian nation, the authenticity of the festa, for its organizers as for the historian, is founded on the *reserve* of the exhibited representatives and arranged letters.



We asked previously: Given the theoretical moment that challenges the idea of the *a priori* subject of history, what names might the historian use to narrate the history of the age of the masses? Tuscan elite, the worker societies, women, southern civic associations—these were the names the Dante Centenary ordered and deployed in order to construct an Italian order. They are the ones to which we still return when revisiting this construction. Yet, the pride of the humble, eager to talk of themselves and others, also form part of this tale. Their presence marks the fact that the dichotomies deployed by Risorgimento historiography do not exhaust the narrative neither of the Dante Centenary itself nor of its archive. However, the “excess of words” of the multitude, whose actions and words made the event of the Festa conceivable, enter this account only insofar as they find a name, or as names find them: the latter emerge due to shifting historical circumstances so that the present instant (the emergence of this or that designation) permits the past to surface differently, recasting the genealogy. From the Dante Centenary, we glean the possibility that historiography is not organized through the categories that create out of events an order, but through the names that recollect the excess of words.

## Notes

### Introduction

1. The Piedmontese historian and political figure, Cesare Balbo (1789–1853), cited in Antonella Gioli, *Monumenti e oggetti d'arte nel regno d'Italia* (Rome: Ministero per i Beni Culturali e Ambienti, 1997), 37.
2. Carlo Dionisotti, *Geografia e storia della letteratura italiana* (Turin: Einaudi, 1967), 285.
3. Richard C. Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence* (New York: Academic Press, 1980).
4. The number of such studies has multiplied in recent years. The pioneering and classic texts include Ilaria Porciani, *La festa della nazione. Rappresentazione dello stato e spazi sociali nell'Italia unita* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1997); Bruno Tobia, *Una patria per gli italiani. Spazi, itinerari, monumenti nell'Italia unita* (Rome and Bari: Laterza, 1991); Umberto Levra, *Fare gli italiani. Memorie e celebrazione del Risorgimento* (Turin: Comitato di Torino dell'Istituto per la Storia del Risorgimento, 1992); Mario Baioni, *La religione della patria. Musei e istituti del culto risorgimentale* (Trevisto: Pagus, 1994); Mario Isnenghi ed., *I luoghi della memoria. Personaggi e date dell'Italia unita* (Rome: Laterza, 1997); Luciano Nasto, *Le feste civili a Roma nell'Ottocento* (Rome: Gruppo Editoriale Internazionale, 1994); Alberto Banti, *La nazione del risorgimento. Parentela, sanità e onore alle origini dell'Italia unita* (Turin: Einaudi, 2000); Axel Korner, *Politics of Culture in Liberal Italy from Unification to Fascism* (New York and London: Routledge, 2009); Alberto Banti and Roberto Bizzocchi eds., *Immagini della nazione nell'Italia del Risorgimento* (Rome: Carocci editore, 2002); Paul Arpaia, "Constructing a national Identity From a Created Literary Past," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 7, no. 2 (August 2002):192–214. Maurizio Ridolfi, *Le feste nazionali* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2003); Cathrine Brice, "La Monarchia e la 'religione della patria' nella costruzione dell'identità nazionale," *Momoria e Ericerta* 13 (May–August 2003): 140–147; Cristina della Coletta, *World's Fairs Italian Style. The Great Exhibitions in Turin and Their Narratives, 1860-1915* (Toronto: University of Toronto

- Press: 2006). The turn towards culture in Risorgimento historiography is clearly outlined in a collection of essays edited by Alberto Banti and Paul Ginsborg, *Storia d'Italia. Annali 22. Il Risorgimento* (Turin: Ainaudi, 2007).
5. Law number 2245 of administrative unification was passed on March 20, 1865. It addressed communal and provincial regulations, public security, public health, and public works. The laws on legislative Unification went into effect on April 2, 1865. They addressed all civil procedures, from marriage to commerce.
  6. Filippo Sabetti, *The Search for Good Government: Understanding the Paradox of Italian Democracy* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2000), 49.
  7. For a discussion of the composition and politics of the Tuscan Liberal elite see Ernesto Ragionieri, "I moderati toscani e la classe dirigente italiana negli anni di Firenze capitale," *Paragone* 6 (1965): 56–75; Raffaele Romanelli, "Urban Patricians and 'Bourgeois' Society: A Study of Wealthy Elites in Florence, 1862–1904," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 1, no. 1 (1995): 4–35; Arnaldo Salvestrini, *I moderati e la classe dirigente italiana 1859–1876* (Florence: Olschki, 1865); Zeffiro Ciuffoletti, "La vita politica e amministrativa," in Giorgio Mori and Piero Roggi eds., *Firenze 1815–1945: Un bilancio storiografico* (Firenze: Le Monnier, 1990), 99–125.
  8. The desire to accentuate local contributions to the formation of Italian national identity has remained strong despite the growth of the separatist movement in northern Italy. In a January 2000 regional law (n. 7135), Piedmont allocated one billion lire to the Museo Nazionale del Risorgimento Italiano "per la valorizzazione della tradizione risorgimentale piemontese nel processo storico di costruzione dell'unità e dell'identità nazionale italiana"; in the website of Consiglio regionale del Piemonte, <http://csiultra.csi.it:8005/base/progetti/a7135a.html>.
  9. Ettore Socci, "Da Firenze a regione," in Gaetano Trombatore ed., *Memorialisti dell'Ottocento* (Milan: R. Ricciardi, 1953), 588.
  10. "siamo soli quassù ed io venero Dante come uno dei nostri profeti nazionali e mi unisco col amore laico! Amore che gli si rende"; BNCF, Sala Manoscritti, E. Peruzzi Diario, May 13–24, 1865, cc. 38v–41r.
  11. BNCF, Sala Manoscritti, carte varie 27, 255, Fraticelli letter to Enrico Poggi, December 28 1864.
  12. See chapter 4. For a discussion of the ideological foundations of the emergence of the stereotypes of the South in historiography, see the collection of articles in Schneider ed., *Italy's Southern Question. Orientalism in One Country* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 1998). See especially the contribution by Nelson Moe, "The Emergence of the Southern Question in Villari, Franchetti and Sonnino"; Marta Petrusiewicz, *Come il Meridione divenne una Questione. Rappresentazioni del Sud prima*

- e dopo il Quarantotto* (Soveria Manelli: Rubettino, 1998). My findings support the recent revisionist historiography that question these longstanding stereotypes. For recent historical studies of the Italian South, see: John Davis, *Naples and Napoleon: Southern Italy and the European Revolutions 1780-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Nelson Moe, *The View From Vesuvius, Italian Culture and the Southern Question* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).
13. See chapter 4.
  14. Alberto Banti, *Storia della borghesia italiana: L'età liberale* (Rome: Donzelli, 1996), 188; Marco Meriggi, *Milano borghese. Circoli ed élites nell'Ottocento* (Venice: Marisilio, 1992).
  15. Marco Fincardi, "Le bandiere del 'Vecchio Scarpone.' Dinamiche socio-politiche e appropriazioni di simboli dallo stato liberale al fascismo," in Fiorenza Tarozzi ed., *Gli italiani ed il tricolore* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1999), 208.
  16. My argument supports and extends Christopher Duggan's recent thesis regarding the failures of the Italian monarchy to serve as a national symbol in the decade following the unification. Relating this "problem of the Monarchy" to the rise of nationalism, he argues that only after 1870s, the monarchy's frailties became evident. Christopher Duggan, "Francesco Crispi, the Problem of Monarchy and the Origin of Nationalism," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 15, no. 3 (2010): 336–353. For an overview of the complex role of the figure of monarchy in the Italian Unification, see Cathrine Brice, "La dinastis Savoia" in Mario Isnengi and Eva Cecchinato eds., *Fare L'Italia: Unita e disunita nel Risorgimento* (Turin: Unione Tipografico Editrice Torinese, 2008).
  17. The Liberal historiography since the 1950s, beginning with the work of Denis Mack Smith, demystified the heroic actions of the leaders of the Italian national resurgence. It called into question the orthodoxy of attributing unification to a national aspiration for independence, freedom, and national unity. Mack Smith focused on the political rivalry between moderation and radicalism, personified respectively in the figures of Cavour and Garibaldi, during the years preceding unification. He explained unification more in terms of a dynastic-Piedmontese agenda, or political expediency, than in terms of a widespread national aspiration for independence; Denis Mack Smith, *Cavour and Garibaldi: A Study of Political Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954); and *The Making of Italy: 1796–1866* (New York: Walter and Company, 1968). The Marxist historiography of the Risorgimento began with, and continues to remain faithful to, Antonio Gramsci's view of Italian unification as a "failed" or "passive" revolution. Gramsci blamed the failure of the Risorgimento on the incapacity of its leaders to provide leadership, and to create a revolutionary program with a wide-range national appeal. Given that the Risorgimento leaders increasingly isolated

themselves from the populace, unification emerged as a movement of the elite, which was doomed to fail. It eventually yielded a permanent breach between the Italian state and civil society, as well as to political instability and social disorder. For further study, see the collection of essays edited by John Davis, *Gramsci and Italy's Passive Revolution* (London: Croom Helm, 1979).

18. This historical agenda of Liberal Italy is clearly articulated in a collection of essays edited by William Salomone, *From Risorgimento to Fascism. An Inquiry into the Origins of the Totalitarian State* (New York: Anchor Books, 1970). See also Richard Drake, *Byzantium for Rome: The Politics of Nostalgia in Umbertian Italy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980). Drake argues that the profound disillusionment of Italians that emerged from the failure of the Italian government to fulfill the aspirations of the Risorgimento motivated both the politics and historiography of post-Risorgimental Italy.
19. For the contours of this "revisionist" historiography see John Davis, "Remapping Italy's Path to the Twentieth Century," *Journal of Modern History* 66, no. 2 (1994): 291–320; and Lucy Riall, *The Italian Risorgimento: State, Society and National Unification* (New York: Routledge, 1994). Lucy Riall's updated work, *Risorgimento: The History of Italy From Napoleon to Nation-state* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009). Riall's "Guide to Further Reading" provides not only a valuable bibliography, but also a concise description of the recent innovations in and approaches to the study of Risorgimento.
20. Riall argues that the Marxist account of the failure of Italian state formation—characterized by a gap between the elite and the populace—is incomplete. In her case study of Western Sicily, she demonstrates how the local elite resisted the centralization plans enforced primarily by Piedmont. She further suggests that regional loyalties, as well as the local elite's opposition to what they perceived as colonization of Italy by the Piedmontese, were part of the reason for the failures of unification after 1860. See Lucy Riall, "Liberal Policy and The Control of Public Order in Western Sicily 1860-1862," *The Historical Journal* 35, no. 2 (1992): 345–368. For a discussion of the elite's resistance to centralization plans in Emilia Romagna see Maria Serena Piretti and Giovanni Guidi, eds., *L'Emilia Romagna in parlamento* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1992).
21. Marco Meriggi and Pierangelo Schiera, eds., *Della città alla nazione. Borghesie ottocentesche in Italia e in Germania* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1993).
22. Enrico Francia argues that the Tuscan "national guard" of 1848, while functioning as a symbol of the affirmation of the national, was in fact a civic guard established by the local Florentine elite in order to prevent popular social upheaval. By and large, this guard served to defend the local elite's social and political dominance over the more radical groups

- that had grown politicized during the years 1847–1849. See Francia, “Tra ordine pubblico e rivoluzione nazionale: Il dibattito sulla guardia civica in Toscana (1847-1849),” in *Della città alla nazione*, 90–91. Stefano Sepe demonstrates that, after unification, the regional deputies were more concerned with local rather than national issues. He explains that the process of bureaucratic centralization that followed unification served only to strengthen the position of the local elite. See Sepe, “Amministrazione e ‘nazionalizzazione’. Il ruolo della burocrazia statale nella costruzione dello stato unitario (1861–1900),” *ibid.*, 307–341.
23. Banti, *La nazione del Risorgimento* (Turin: Einaudi, 2000).
  24. Tobia, *Una patria per gli italiani*.
  25. Bruno Tobia, “Associazionismo e patriottismo: il caso del pellegrinaggio nazionale a Roma del 1884,” in Merrigi, *Dalla città alla nazione*, 230–231.
  26. *Ibid.*, 234.
  27. Cornell University’s Kroch Library’s Rare Manuscripts collection holds an immense compilation of works on the publications in honor of these two Centenaries.
  28. Beatrice Pisa, *Nazione e politica nella Società “Dante Alighieri”* (Rome: Bonacci, 1995).
  29. Roberto Balzani, “Il mito del Risorgimento nell’associazionismo culturale della classe dirigente unitaria,” *Il Risorgimento* 46, nos. 1–2 (1994): 277.
  30. A comprehensive discussion of the “myth of Risorgimento in the United Italy,” appears in the collection of articles by the leading scholars of modern Italy in *Il Risorgimento* 47, nos. 1–2 (1995).
  31. Balzani, “Il mito del Risorgimento,” 278.
  32. *Ibid.*
  33. Robert Darnton, “The Symbolic Element in History,” *Journal of Modern History* 58, no. 1 (1986): 218; Roger Chartier, “Text, Symbols, and Frenchness,” *Journal of Modern History* 57, no. 3 (1985): 682–695.
  34. Giovanni Levi, “On Microhistory,” in Peter Burke ed., *New Perspectives on Historical Writing* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), 93–114.
  35. *Ibid.*, 105.
  36. I am using the term “thick” in the Geertzian sense of “thick description”; see Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: BasicBooks, 1973).
  37. Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate Scholar Press, 1994).
  38. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
  39. Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformations of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1989).

40. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 125–133.
41. David Forgacs ed., *An Antonio Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings, 1916–1935* (New York: Schocken Books, 1988), 339.
42. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Cultural Writings* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1985), 183.
43. *Ibid.*, 180.
44. Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

## I The Dante Centenary and the Centenary's Dante

1. Carlo Dionisotti, "Varia fortuna di Dante," in *Geografia e storia della letteratura italiana* (Turin: Einaudi, 1967), 220.
2. "Se intesero di festeggiare in Dante il primato della poesia italiana, scelsero male il momento davvero, in questi tempi di prosa e di ladri"; newspaper *La Bandiera del Popolo* (May 14, 1865).
3. Referring to the post-Risorgimento period, Victor Emmanuel remarked: "The age of poetry had given way to an age of prose"; quoted in Spencer Di Scala, *Italy From Revolution to Republic* (New York: Westview Press, 1998), 121.
4. Raffaele Romanelli, *L'Italia liberale* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1990), 19–91; Romano Paolo Coppini, *L'opera politica di Cambray-Digny* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia E Letteratura, 1975); Giovanni Spadolini, *Firenze capitale* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1971), 19–159; Di Scala, *Italy From Revolution to Republic*, 121–129.
5. Clara Lovett, *The Democratic Movement in Italy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 117–157; Luigi Salvatorelli, *Prima e dopo il Quarantotto* (Turin: De Silva, 1948).
6. Antonio Anzilotti, *Gioberti* (Florence: Vallecchi, 1931).
7. For different views of the Risorgimento and unification process see Harry Hearder, *Italy in the Age of Risorgimento* (London and New York: Longman, 1983); Denis Mack Smith, *The Making of Italy: 1796–1866* (London: Macmillan, 1988); Luigi Salvatorelli, *The Risorgimento: Thought and Action* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1970); Lucy Riall, *The Risorgimento: State, Society and National Unification* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994); Raymond Grew, *A Sterner Plan for Italian Unity. The Italian National Society in the Risorgimento* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963); Stuart Woolf, *The Italian Risorgimento* (London: Longmans, 1969).

8. For a useful survey see Alberto Aquarone, *I problemi dell'Italia unita: dal Risorgimento a Giolitti* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1989).
9. Franco Molfese, *Storia del brigandaggio dopo l'Unità* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1966); David Hilton, *Brigandage in South Italy* (London: Sampson Low, Son & Marston, 1864).
10. For oppositional movements during the first years of unification see Clara Lovett, *The Democratic Movement in Italy, 1830-1876* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Giovanni Spadolini, *I radicali dell'Ottocento, da Garibaldi a Cavallotti* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1982); Franco Della Peruta, *Conservatori, liberali e democratici nel Risorgimento* (Milan: F. Angeli, 1989); Bianca Montale, "Clero e società civile a Parma dopo l'unità (1861-1866)," *Rassegna Storica del Risorgimento* 69, no. 4 (1982): 420-441; Arturo Jemolo, *Church and State in Italy 1850-1950* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1960).
11. Lovett, *The Democratic Movement*, 189.
12. *Ibid.*, 189-208.
13. *Ibid.*, 209-229.
14. Eugenio Artom, "Il problema d'un decennio" *Rassegna Storica Toscana* 3, nos. 3-4 (1957): 194.
15. For a discussion of the socio-political effects of the September Convention see Arnaldo Salvestrini, "I moderati toscani nel periodo della Destra al potere," in *La Toscana nell'Italia unita. Aspetti e momenti di storia toscana 1861-1945* (Florence: Unione Regionale delle Provincie Toscane, 1962), 62-73; Marcello Vannucci, *Firenze Ottocento* (Rome: Newton Compton Editori, 1992), 41-45.
16. Arnaldo Salvestrini, *Il movimento antiunitario in Toscana (1859-1866)* (Florence: Olschi, 1957), 63.
17. Di Scala, *Italy From Revolution to the Republic*, 123. Di Scala's term is probably an exaggeration since no more than 20 people were killed during the demonstrations.
18. Emilia Peruzzi, wife of the Florentine minister of the interior, Ubaldino Peruzzi, referring to Turin's reaction to the September Convention, writes in a letter to Cambray Digny: "... The conduct of the Municipality (Turin) was undignified—it speaks to the Turinese about their *sacred rights*" ("La condotta del Municipio è stata indegna—parla ai Torinesi dei loro *sacri diritti*!"); BNCF, Carteggio Cambray Digny, cassetta 42, September 22, 1864; quoted in Arnaldo Salvestrini, "I moderati toscani nel periodo della Destra al potere," 64.
19. Sergio Camerani, *Cronache di Firenze capitale* (Florence: Olschki, 1971), 35.
20. *Ibid.*, 82.
21. *Ibid.*, 41.
22. *Ibid.*
23. *Ibid.*, 40.



24. Victor Emmanuel wrote to his brother: "I don't like to stay in Florence, the air makes me sick. I stay because I have to"; *ibid.*, 51.
25. For a discussion of the Florentine reaction to the news of the transfer of the capital see Coppini, "Firenze capitale: un chiodo nell'occhio di Dante," in *L'opera politica*, 89–102.
26. The indifferent and anxious attitude of Florentines stunned the new Piedmontese prefect of Florence, Girolamo Cantelli, upon his arrival in September 1864; Camerani, *Cronache di Firenze capitale*, 33.
27. A typical example is Lucio Capizucchi, *Firenze ed i nuovi venuti* (Florence: Tipografia Cavour, 1865). For a chronicle of the interaction between "i nuovi venuti" and the Florentines see Ugo Pesci, *Firenze capitale (1865-1870)* (Florence: R. Bemporad & Figlio, 1904), 70–74.
28. Camerani, *Cronache di Firenze capitale*, 36.
29. The January 5, 1865, article reads: "It will be better for Tuscans: better for our capitalists, those who will learn that without partnership and association, capital is dead wealth; better for our manufacturers, who will learn to use the natural resources of places that have been left unproductive; better for our shops and retailers, who will gain not lose clients; and finally better for our consumers, who thanks to the competition will see more equilibrium and fair prices. This kind of competition (from the Piedmontese) we should welcome. We should like... to found successfully in Florence a branch of Turinese commerce. This is a struggle which we favor. This is the only way in which the diverse provinces of Italy can reach reciprocal respect and mutual esteem, like brothers in love. For a little while, this violence that we have to do to our tranquil customs is painful and difficult for Tuscans. But if we don't comply with what follows, we will not be well" (Sara meglio anco per noi toscani: meglio per i nostri capitalisti, i quali apprenderanno che senza l'associazione il capitale e una ricchezza morta; meglio pei nostri produttori, i quali apprenderanno a far tesoro di tante risorse naturali del paese che sono lasciate improduttive; meglio per i nostri negozianti e rivenditori, i quali impareranno, non essendo più padroni del mercato, che il tornaconto vero non consiste nel vender poco a caro prezzo; meglio infine pei nostri consumatori che grazie alla concorrenza vedranno tenuta sempre in giusto equilibrio la bilancia dei prezzi. Noi questa concorrenza la desideriamo. Vorremmo quindi che la proposta Nigra di fondare a Firenze succursali del commercio torinese fosse portata ad effetto[...]. Questo è la lotta che ci piace: questo è l'unico modo pel quale le diverse provincie d'Italia giungeranno a stimarsi reciprocamente, come già fraternamente si amano. Per un po di tempo questa violenza che dobbiamo fare alle nostre tranquille abitudini, parra penosa a noi toscani: ma in seguito ce ne compiaceremo e ce ne troveremo bene"); Pier Francesco Listri ed., *Giornale di cento anni fa, 1860-1900: dal quotidiano "La Nazione" cronache di Firenze e della Toscana, fatti e servizi dal mondo* (Florence: Bonechi, 1984), 89.

30. Quoted in Giovanni Spadolini, *Firenze capitale*, 164.
31. Camerini, *Cronache di Firenze capitale*, 34.
32. *Ibid.*, 35.
33. For a classic discussion of the composition and politics of the Tuscan components of the historical Right, see Ernesto Ragionieri, "I moderati Toscani e la classe dirigente italiana negli anni di Firenze capitale," in *Paragone* no. 186 (1965): 56–75.
34. The group continued to use historical aristocratic titles such as *Maire Pucci*, *Gonfaloniere* Cambray Digny, *Podestà* Della Gherardesca; Carlo Pazzagli, "La vita sociale," in Giorgio Mori and Piero Roggi eds., *Firenze 1815–1945. Un bilancio storiografico* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1994), 63.
35. Zeffiro Ciuffoletti, "La vita politica," in *ibid.*, 111.
36. Carlo Pazzagli, "La vita sociale," in *Firenze: 1815–1945*, 60.
37. *Ibid.*, 69.
38. In 1810, out of 70,000 Florentines, the poor numbered 37,000. The "indigent," defined as those unable to survive even with the earnings from their labor numbered 23,000; Giovanni Gozzini, "The Poor and the Life Cycle in Florence, 1813–59," *Social History* 18, no. 3 (1993): 301. As late as 1892, out of 180,000 inhabitants of Florence, 72,000 were considered poor; Ciuffoletti, "La vita politica," 114.
39. William Hancok, *Ricasoli and the Risorgimento in Tuscany* (London: Faber and Gwyer, 1926).
40. Arnaldo Salvestrini, *I moderati toscani e la classe dirigente italiana* (Florence: Olschki, 1965), 65–68; Salvestrini, *Il movimento antiunitario*, 65–67; Ernesto Sestan, "La Destra toscana," *Rassegna Storica Toscana* 7, no. 2–4 (1961): 227.
41. In her study of the world's fairs organized by Turin, Della Coletta argues that Turin did not give up its self conception as Italy's "intellectual and moral core" even after the transfer of capital and the seat of government after the September Convention. See Della Coletta, *World's Fairs Italian Style*, 15–17.
42. Ugo Pesci, *Firenze capitale*, 75. (Nessuna occasione poteva prestarsi meglio di quella ad una solenne manifestazione del pensiero nazionale, ed a presentare, diciamo così, la nuova capitale ai più insigni cittadini delle altre provincie d'Italia.)
43. Bruno Tobia, "Una forma di pedagogia nazionale tra cultura e politica," in *Il Risorgimento* 47, no. 1–2 (1996): 176–179. Also see Bruno Tobia, "Una cultura per la nuova Italia," in *Storia d'Italia: Il nuovo stato e la società civile (1861–1887)* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1995), 510–525.
44. For a detailed discussion of cultural institutions in Florence during the period see Cosimo Ceccutti, "Le istituzioni culturali," in Mori and Roggi, *Firenze 1815–1945*, 183–253. For an early catalogue of Florentine cultural institutions see Vannuccio Vannucci, *Istituzioni Fiorentine. Raccolta di monografie dei principali istituti di beneficenza, letterari,*

- scientifici, educativi, circoli di ricreazione, ecc.* (Florence: F. Lumachi, 1902). For the politics of cultural heritage during the postunification decades see doctoral thesis by Simona Troilo, *Patrimonio. Il bene storico artistico e l'idnetita locale nell'Italia Centrale (1860–1909)* (Florence: European University Institute, 2004).
45. Ilaria Porciani, "Stato e ricerca storica al momento dell'Unificazione: la vicenda della Deputazione toscana di storia patria," *Archivio Storico Italiano* 136 (1978): 351–403.
  46. Ilaria Porciani, "Stato e ricerca storica al momento dell' Unificazione," 357.
  47. The Deputazione di storia patria in Emilia, in Romagna, Parma and Lombardy, are examples of such historical societies.
  48. Quoted in Eugenio Garin, *L'istituto superiore cento anni dopo* (Florence: Università degli Studi, 1960), 5.
  49. For a detailed analysis of the topic see Porciani, "Stato e ricerca storica al momento dell'Unificazione," 358.
  50. For a discussion of Piedmontese centralizing plans for the universities see Ilaria Porciani, "Lo stato e la questione dell'università," in Ilaria Porciani ed., *L'Università tra Otto e Novecento: I modelli europei e il caso italiano* (Naples: Jovene Editore, 1995); Mauro Moretti and Ilaria Porciani, "Il sistema universitario tra nazione e città: un campo di tensione," in Meriggi and Scheira, *Dalla città alla nazione*, 289–306.
  51. Porciani, *L'università tra Otto e Novecento*, 136–137.
  52. *Ibid.*, 143–146.
  53. *Ibid.*, 162–164.
  54. Moretti and Porciani, "il sistema universitario tra nazione e città: un campo di tensione," 290.
  55. *Ibid.*, 150 and 164.
  56. *Ibid.*, 167.
  57. *Ibid.*, 168.
  58. Antonella Gioli, *Monumenti e oggetti d'arte nel regno d'Italia. Il patrimonio artistico degli enti religiosi soppressanti tra riuso, tutela e dispersione* (Rome: Ministro per i Beni Culturali e Ambientali, 1997), 37–38.
  59. Cesare Cantù quoted in *ibid.*, 40. (...in Firenze conventi e monasteri sono altrettante gallerie. E non dico gallerie nel senso più usitato della parola, cioè sale o magazzini ornati più o meno, in cui si accumula una quantità di statue e quadri, smossi dalla posta, dall'aria, dal contorno che vi dava significazione, per collocarli secondo la capacità delle pareti e l'opportunità della luce. Dico che a Firenze i monasteri sono gallerie di capi d'arte, ancora nel posto ove li creò l'arte, ricoverata e covata sotto l'ale della religione.... L'inventario! Ma questo attesterà ai posteri ciò che perderemmo!).
  60. For a catalogue of the ecclesiastical buildings that were confiscated at this time to house the offices of the Italian state in Florence, see Piero

- Roselli, "Nascita di una capitale," in *Nascita di una capitale: Firenze, settembre 1864/giugno 1865* (Florence: Alinea, 1985), 34–37.
61. Elisa Spilotros, "Problemi del trasferimento della capitale," in *Nascita di una capitale*, 119; and Piero Roselli, "Nascita di una capitale," 28.
  62. Giuseppe Bianchi served on the Dante Centenary Commission, and was one of the men in charge of the creation of the festa program.
  63. Caricature reproduced in Giovanni Spadolini, *Firenze capitale*, 248. (Giuseppe Bianchi muratore toscano rifiuta al bove Falconieri di gittare abbasso la volta di Cosimo I, ma il prelodato bove fa eseguire tanto vandalismo dai suoi seguaci.... Evviva la Commissione artistica....)
  64. Helmut Smith, *German Nationalism and Religious Conflict. Culture, Ideology, Politics, 1870–1914* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995).
  65. Capizucchi, Firenze ed i nuovi venuti, 5.
  66. *Ibid.*, 6.
  67. *Ibid.* (Cercare in essa monumenti d'arte, eretti ad eternare le gesta d'antichi eroi, sarebbe vano... Tutto in essa è moderno, o per lo meno può riferirsi a virtù e glorie moderne, talchè la generazione vivente può, per così dire, specchiarsi, e vedersi riflessa.)
  68. ASCF, Consiglio Generale di Comune di Firenze (1864–1865), adunanza 14 November 1863. (Essendo che Dante Alighieri, il maggiore poeta dell'era cristiana e della civiltà moderna, fu Fiorentino; considerando che prima prova di civiltà è l'onorare la memoria di quelli uomini che l'ingegno e la vita consacrarono in testimonio del vero e in servizio della patria...; considerando che la città di Firenze, ricca di ogni gentilezza anco nei tempi delle maggiori sventure della patria, non può meglio che con un grande atto verso il massimo Cantore provare che non venne meno al suo compito nella famiglia Italiana, e dimostrare al mondo che con Dante furono fecondati in lei tutti i semi della (...) Civiltà.)
  69. "... Che l'illustre A. Manzoni sia l'interprete presso il Parlamento Italiano della proposta diretta a far decretare Solennità Nazionale <Au: Italics ok? OK> il giorno Centenario della nascita di Dante firmata dagli'Italiani, come egli dice, un nuovo plebiscito"; ASCF, busta 4527, adunanza 1 February 1864. In the minutes of the General Commission, the proposal appears with the following wording: "Domanda al Parlamento che il giorno della nascita di Dante sia richiamato giorno di festa Nazionale"; ASCF, busta 4526, adunanza 1 February 1864.
  70. For a comprehensive historical analysis of the Festa dello Statuto, see Ilaria Porciani, *La festa della nazione*; also see Ilaria Porciani, "Lo Statuto e il Corpus Domini: La festa nazionale dell'Italia liberale," in *Il Risorgimento* 47, no. 1–2 (1995): 149–173.
  71. Porciani, *La festa della nazione*, 22–26.
  72. *Giornale del Centenario* no. 13 (10 June 1864): 102. (Il parlamento dovrebbe decretare che l'anniversario dello Statuto, invece di venire nella

prima domenica di giugno, venisse, dal 1865, nel dì 21 di maggio, e dire il perché di questa, apparentemente tanto lieve, mutazione.)

73. Ibid.

74. La Festa di Dante no. 6 (June 5, 1864): 20. (my italics). (Ecco due nomi che paiono fatti apposta per stare insieme, e non c'è che dire, ci stanno proprio bene. Sicuro, non tutti saranno di questo parere, perché fra gli altri brutti vizi che ci sono nel mondo v'è quello bruttissimo dell'ingratitudine; e se non ci ricordiamo di un beneficio ricevuto ieri, figuriamoci d'uno che s'ebbe seicent'anni fa. Però qui si tratta di Dante e non bisognerebbe scordarsi di quanto dobbiamo a lui. Ma mi direte: O come c'entra questo colla festa nazionale? Benone c'entra, io dico e ve lo provo.... Dunque perché si fa la festa nazionale italiana? È chiaro: la si fa perché si rammenta tutto il bene che si è fatto o ci è stato fatto in questo mondo, per disporsi, con gratitudine verso chi ce l'ha lasciato e con perseveranza ad andare avanti e cercare di metterne insieme dell'altro.... Ma fra le memorie vi è quella di Dante che davvero è la prima di tutte, non solamente per la data ma anche per l'importanza. Non è stato lui che per primo ha visto dov'era il guaio e ha alzato la voce per guarirci dai nostri mali; non è stato lui il più grande e il primo dei nostri esuli; non sono stati i dolori d'Italia che lo portarono alla tomba prima del tempo e fecero che lasciasse alla nazione quel glorioso testamento della Divina Commedia? Dante e l'Italia sono la stessa cosa, perché egli fu tutto di lei, ed essa tutto ebbe da lui, ed oggi fa di tutto per sempre più ispirarsi alle sue dottrine. Quindi la festa nazionale che oggi si celebra è la festa anche di Dante. Anzi sarebbe bene che d'ora in poi, e cominciando l'anno prossimo, la festa dello statuto fosse portata al giorno della nascita di Dante e in quello mantenuta per l'avvenire; perché volere o non volere egli è stato il motore dell'unità italiana; e se nelle feste nazionali si ricorda o si onora la memoria dei nostri grandi Benefattori sfido a trovare chi meriti questo bel nome quanto Dante Alighieri).

75. La Festa di Dante no. 55 (May 14, 1864): 216. (nonostante un atto del Parlamento avrebbe avuto un effetto morale importantissimo, quello di provare al mondo che la festa di Dante è la festa della unità d'Italia).

76. In its first meeting, the Centenary Commission remarked that the best manner in which to pursue the work of nationalizing the Dante Festa was through the development of "public opinion," and not parliamentary legislation; ASCF, busta 4526, adunanza February 1, 1864.

77. Charles Rearick, "Festivals in Modern France: The Experience of the Third Republic," *Journal of Contemporary History* 12 (1977): 439-440.

78. Ibid., 438.

79. Porciani, *La festa della nazione*, 26.

80. Ibid., 31.

81. ASCF, busta 4526, adunanza February 1, 1864.

82. Newspaper *La Guardia Nazionale* (May 20, 1865), "Relazione delle festa che ebbero luogo in Firenze."
83. Porciani, *La festa della nazione*, 38–51.
84. Dionisotti, "Varia fortuna di Dante," 208.
85. Ibid.
86. Ibid., 208–209
87. Ibid., 223.
88. Ibid.
89. Milbank, *Dante and the Victorians* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1998), 2.
90. Ibid., 4.
91. Ibid., 2–3.
92. Milbank is referring to John Ruskin's description of Dante as the central man of all the world; *ibid.*, 1.
93. Ibid., 63.
94. Ibid., 59–60.
95. The editors of the review *The Athenaeum* took issue with Barlow's characterization of Dante as the "greatest modern poet." They changed the adjective "modern" to "Italian". Barlow reprimanded the editors with the following words: "The alteration [...] not only altered my sentiments [...] but unjustly deprived "Dante" of the full measure of his fame, and of the honor intended to be done him. I hold Dante to be the greatest known poet that ever lived[...]. We are jealous of the supremacy, or supposed supremacy of our own Shakespeare[...]. Perhaps even we may or ought to be satisfied in placing the Immortal Bard of Avon second only to his precursor of Florence." The editors noted and rejected Barlow's argument; in *The Athenaeum* 1643 (January 1, 1859): 19–20.
96. In reference to the 1865 Centenary, John Addington Symonds noted: "Creator of her language and founder of her literature, Dante gave to Italy both word and thought, added intellectual individuality to the idea of race and soil, and hence is fairly entitled to be regarded as the father of an Italian nation, of an Italian autonomy; but neither as prophet nor father of the present Italian unity, of which he never dreamed"; John Addington Symonds, "Dante," in *Cornhill Magazine* (July 1865): 244. Quoted in Milbank, *Dante and the Victorians*, 61.

## 2 The City Organizes the Nation: The Structures of the Centenary

1. For a history of the Italian federalist movements during the Risorgimento period, see Arnold Blumberg, "The Demise of Italian Federalism," *Historian* 18, no. 1 (1956): 57–82; Franco della Peruta, "Unità e federazione durante il Risorgimento," in Angelo Varni ed., *Storia*

- dell'autonomia in Italia tra Ottocento e Novecento* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2001), 11–37. Filippo Sabetti, “The Making of Italy as an Experiment in Constitutional Choice,” *Publius* 12, no. 3 (1982): 65–84; Paolo Bagnoli, “Sul Federalismo di Carlo Cattaneo,” *Pensiero Politico* 26, no. 1 (1993): 14–26; Pietro Giuseppe Grasso, “Proposte di autonomia regionale agli inizi dell’unità d’Italia,” *Politico* 59, no. 2 (1994): 233–262. See also Paolo Bagnoli, *L’idea di Italia 1815-1861* (Reggio Emilia: Diabasis, 2007) for discrete chapters on conceptions of Italian unity by Cattaneo and Gioberti.
2. The literature on the polemics between the supporters of centralization and supporters of decentralization generally, and the administrative laws of 1865 particularly, is massive. The following are the most notable and recent studies containing extensive bibliographical references: Raffaele Romanelli, “Il problema del potere locale dopo il 1865. Autogoverno, finanze comunali, borghesie,” in Maria Bigaran, ed., *Istituzioni e borghesie locali nell’Italia liberale* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1986); Adrian Lyttelton, “Nation, Region, and City,” in Carl Levy, ed., *Italian Regionalism: History, Identity, and Politics* (London: Berg, 1996); Silvana Patriarca, *Numbers and Nationhood* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), chapter 8; Sabetti, *The Search for Good Government*, chapters 2 and 3.
  3. Romanelli, “Il problema del potere locale,” 104.
  4. Raffaele Romanelli, “Urban Patricians And ‘Bourgeois’ Society. A Study of Wealthy Elites in Florence, 1862-1904,” *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 1, no. 1 (1995): 2.
  5. For a Risorgimento statement on the leading role of the cities, see Carlo Cattaneo, “La città considerata come principio ideale delle istorie italiane,” *Crepuscolo* (October–December 1858); for recent studies see Sabetti, *The Search for Good Government*, 64–65; Armand Patruco, *The Critics of the Italian Parliamentary System* (New York: Garland Publications, 1992), 31; Martin Thom, “City, Region and Nation: Carlo Cattaneo and the Making of Italy,” *Citizenship Studies* 3, no. 2 (1999): 187–201.
  6. Lucy Riall, “Liberal Policy and the Control of Public Order in Western Sicily, 1860-1862,” *Historical Journal* 35, no. 2 (1992): 345–368. Riall argues that the resistance of the local elite to the centralizing modern state explains the failure of nation-state formation in Italy. See also Lucrezia Zappa, *Enti locali e potere centrale. L’opposizione all’accentramento, 1861–1865* (Rome: Gruppo Editoriale Internazionale, 1999). For the dynamics of relationship between the municipality and the state during the post-unification decades, see also Oscar Gaspari, *L’Italia dei municipi. Il movimento comunale in età liberale 1879-1906*, Rome: Donzelli editore, 1998.
  7. Fabio Rugge, “Le nozioni di città e cittadino nel lungo Ottocento. Tra ‘pariforme sistema’ e nuovo particolarismo,” in Meriggi and Schiera, *Dalla città alla nazione*, 47–64.

8. Lyttelton, "Nation, Region and City," 42–46.
9. Patrucco, *The Critics of the Italian Parliamentary System*, 49.
10. Banti, *Storia della borghesia italiana*, 189–190.
11. The original idea came from the Società degli Amatori della Storia Patria, which then changed its name to the Società Colombaria. In 1818, other Florentine citizens conceived an empty tomb (*cenotafio*), for the occasion of the fifth centenary of Dante's death in 1821. The monument was not inaugurated until 1830 and for several reasons was not deemed satisfactory. For a discussion of these events, see Pio Rajna, *I centennari danteschi passati e il centenario presente* (Rome: Nuova Antologia, 1921).
12. The original promoters, Professors Pagganucci and Giudici, joined other Florentines to found La società Promotrice per il Monumento di Dante in 1857. Other promoters included Giuseppe Borellai, Adolfo Targioni, Ottaviano Targioni, Carlo Fenzi, Enrico Morelli, Giacinto Micoli, Giuseppe Gabbriocotti, Enrico Mayer, and Angiolo Uzielli; in "Documenti per la storia del monumento nazionale a Dante," *Studi Danteschi* 46 (1966): 280.
13. *Ibid.*, 282.
14. BNCF, Sala Manoscritti, Vannucci 11, 50. (Il comitato promotore di una sottoscrizione volontaria per raccogliere denaro onde fare eseguire dallo scultore Pazzi una statua colossale esprimente il Divino Alighieri, con voto concorde dei convenuti nella tornata della scorsa domenica, ha eletto socio promotore.... L'Opera già cominciata sia portata al desiderato compimento, e perchè sorga una volta in una delle pubbliche piazze di Firenze; già designata dal suo municipio un simulacro veramente degno dell'Omero della moderna civiltà.)
15. *Ibid.*, Cambray Digny 40, 14.
16. The manifesto was published on January 25, 1862.
17. The manifesto is also reproduced in "Documenti per la storia del monumento nazionale a Dante," 242. (Ma come l'opera cominciata in tempi infelici alla patria nostra, fu dapprima promossa e aiutata quasi esclusivamente da cittadini toscani: ora che finalmente, dopo il sospiro di secoli, l'Italia è quasi tutta riunita in un corpo, il Comitato Promotore pensò che tutta la grande patria italiana dovesse esser chiamata all'onore di innalzare il novello monumento al più grande di tutti i suoi figli. Perciò i sottoscritti a nome della Società primitiva invitano i Municipi di ogni provincia e tutti i fratelli italiani a contribuire al monumento....)
18. *Ibid.*, 282.
19. Resident members amounted to 141 individuals, and "corrispondenti" to 158. For a list of the names of the individuals see "Documenti per la storia del monumento a Dante," 286–287.
20. *Ibid.*, 280.
21. BNCF, Sala Manoscritti, Cambray Digny 8, 44, Letter of Carlo Bologna to Cambray Digny, April 12, 1865.



22. (My italics). Carlo Bologna's letter reads: "I suspect that the commission for the Centenary may have forgotten to assign a special seat for the members of our society in the amphitheater of Piazza Santa Croce. Since we, as members residing in Florence, and the members coming from other Italian cities, who in addition to their personal offer, have [illegible] oblations from privates, municipalities, and academies, the leading seat cannot [illegible]. And all the more so since our society must participate, as one body, in the solemn procession that inaugurates the festa..." ("mi viene supposto che la commissione per la feste del Centenario si sia dimenticata di assegnare nell'anfiteatro di P. Santa Croce una sede speciale per i componenti della nostra società. Avendo noi, soci residenti in Firenze, e soci corrispondenti nelle altre provincie italiane, le quali oltre la loro offerta personale hanno...oblazioni dei privati, di comuni, e di accademie, il leggio dirigente non può.... Tanto più che la società nostra deve prender parte in corpo alla solenne processione che inaugura la festa..."); in *ibid.* (My italics).
23. *Guida ufficiale per le feste del centenario di Dante* (Florence: Cellini, 1865), 34.
24. For a discussion of the proposals that contributed to the drive toward the Centenary project, see Rajna, *I centenarii danteschi*, 17–22. Rajna seems especially eager to clarify the historical account concerning the original idea for the 1865 Centenary. He credits the Venetian Emilio Teza, later one of Rajna's lifetime teachers, for the initial idea for a Dante Centenary in 1865. Presenting Teza as "not a person who boasted about his own merits," Rajna cites Teza's recommendation published in journal *L'Età presente* (July 3, 1858) under the pseudonym "Did. Nep." Rajna finds evidence that it was in fact Teza's voice that later found "echoes" in the prominent British Dantophile Henry Clark Barlow who has claimed origination in this matter. Rajna characterizes Barlow's article in the *Athenaeum* December 25, 1858, as "breaking through a door which was already open." He is especially critical of Barlow's later insistence in the opening pages of his published description of the Centenary entitled *The Sixth Centenary Festivals of Dante Alighieri* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1866) that he is to be credited for having changed the intended date of the Dante celebrations from 1859 to 1865. According to Rajna "there was nothing to be changed, and very few Italian ears even heard the words of the English journal"; Rajna, *I centenarii danteschi*, 18–19.

A focus on Rajna's deliberations is not intended here as an inquiry into the "real" origins of the Festa. But Rajna's attempts to reclaim the "right of ownership" of the Festa to an Italian, betray a tendency of the Florentine organizers of the Festa. They sought to maintain their claims on Dante and his Centenary. This attitude becomes clearly palpable when we consider the remarkable fact that the Florentine organizers did not even take the initiative to invite Barlow, one of the most distinguished Dante scholars, a figure who clearly had been, at the very

least, a vocal figure within the initial impetus for a Dante Centenary. An April 1865 letter from Barlow penned in Genoa and addressed to the Centenary organizers attests that Barlow attended the Centenary by his own initiative. The passionate Dantofile, who in the next year published the most comprehensive eyewitness account of the event, had to learn about the name of the Secretary of the Dante Commission from the newspapers: “Gracious Prince, reading in the *Gazzetta di Genova* the letter written by Your Excellency, as secretary of the Commission for the Dante Centenary, I must say that, as a result of my work which was recently published in London and dedicated to this solemn event, I have come from London for the special purpose of participating in this festa and representing my country. I have not been sent or appointed by any society, but in honor of Dante, to whom I have dedicated twenty years of my life and my [illegible], I am coming to this festa and I think I will be in Florence between the 6th and the 7th of the month. A copy of my work has been presented to the Municipality of Florence and other copies have been [illegible] to the main libraries of Florence and of Italy. Your humble and devoted servant,...to Your Excellency the Prince Guido Corsini” (“Signor Principe, leggendo nella *Gazzetta di Genova* la lettera di V. E., come segretario della commissione per il centenario di Dante, mi trovo in dovere di dire che, in seguito della mia opera recentemente pubblicata a Londra e dedicata a questa solennità, ho intrapreso un viaggio da Londra specialmente di trovarmi a questa festa e di rappresentare il mio paese. Non sono stato inviato, né deputato da nessuna società, ma in onore di Dante a cui per più di venti anni ho dedicato la mia vita ed i miei [illegible], vengo alla festa, e credo di trovarmi in Firenze verso il cinque o il sei del mese. Una copia della mia opera è stata presentata al Municipio di Firenze, ed altre copie sono state [illegible] alle biblioteche principali in Firenze ed in Italia.... L’umile e devotissimo servitore,...a Sua Eccellenza il Principe Guido Corsini”); ASCF, busta 4537. To be fair to the Italians, it seems that Barlow received a warm welcome when he arrived in Florence and he was invited to the exclusive dinner held in the honor of distinguished foreign guests held on the last evening of the Festa (see chapter 4).

25. Turinese *Rivista Contemporanea* 18 (December 10, 1859): 444; quoted in Rajna, *I centenarii danteschi*, 19–20.
26. The term “oscuro Fiorentino” appears in Rajna’s *I centenarii danteschi*, 24. In fact, Guido Corsini is so obscure that I had difficulty establishing his identity, family or professional history. While he shares his last name with the famous aristocratic Tuscan family, my research in the Corsini family archives established that he is not related to them. A private letter in the Biblioteca Nazionale established that prior to the Centenary Festa, he had served as the Secretary for the Associazione Italiana di Soccorso dei Militari Feriti e Malati in Tempo di Guerra; BNCF, CD, 20bis, 52. After the Festa, having proved himself as an exceptionally

- capable Secretary of the Dante Commission, he was advanced to serve as the Secretary of the Comune di Firenze.
27. De Tivoli, an Italian scholar living in England, had been involved in organizing the 1864 Centenary of Shakespeare in England; Rajna, *I centenarii danteschi*, 24. De Tivoli's proposal, first published in *Il Diritto* (August 15, 1863), was then reproduced in *Giornale del Centenario* no. 4 (March 10, 1864): 28–30. A copy of the proposal can also be found in ASCF, busta 4537, "Appendice del *Diritto*."
  28. *La Gioventù* (1863): 267–71. Excerpts of the article were published in *Giornale del Centenario* no. 5 (March 20, 1864): 37. ([Il Municipio di Firenze] dovrebbe in una *prossima* adunanza *pubblica e solenne* decretare che nel mese di maggio 1865 si celebrerà in Firenze in maniera degna dell'Atene d'Italia e dei tempi novelli il Centenario di Dante.)
  29. Rajna, *I centenarii danteschi*, 24.
  30. ASCF, Acts of the Consiglio Generale (1864–1865), adunanza November 14, 1863.
  31. Ibid.
  32. Ibid., busta 4527, adunanza February 12, 1864. For a list of the "Nomi dei componenti della Commissione Fiorentina per le Feste pel Centenario di Dante Alighieri," see busta 4530.
  33. Representing the nobility were Cav. Niccolò Antinori, Verano Casanuova, Principe Tommaso Corsini, Giuseppe Garzoni, Eugenio Michelozzi, Fabio Uccelli, and Alfredo Serristori.
  34. Representing the "capitalist" class were Carlo Capezzoli, Luigi Cioni, Carlo Fenzi, Pietro Gazzeri, Ferdinando Inercioli, and Giuseppe Servadio.
  35. Representing the *popolani* were Angiolo Barbetti, Gaetano Bianchini, Mariano Cellini, Agostino Masini, Giorgio Paradisi, and Oreste Zanobini.
  36. Professors Emilio Pollastrini, Niccolò Sanesi, and Stefano Ussi.
  37. Professors Ulisse Cambi, Edoardo Fantacchiotti, and Pasquale Romanelli.
  38. Celemaco Bonaiuti, Mariano Falcini, and Giuseppe Poggi.
  39. Luigi Casamorata, Maestro Mabellini, and Carlo Ramani.
  40. Garzoni, Enrico Paradisi, and Carlo Bologna were among those who also served on the municipal government for the year 1865; ASCF, Rappresentanza comunale per l'anno 1865.
  41. For Giuseppe Dolfi's role in Florentine politics see Arnaldo Salvestrini, "Giuseppe Dolfi. Un capopopolo nella rivoluzione dei signori," RST 15, no. 2 (1969): 221–232.
  42. ASCF, buste 4527 and 4526. These notebooks, held separately in the early stages of my research, are now grouped together in one busta, indicated with both numbers.
  43. Throughout April 1865, Corsini received and organized more than 1400 letters of registration addressed to him from across Italy.

44. ASCF, busta 4537, adunanza February 1, 1864.
45. The literary commission included: Emilio Frullani, Drunone Bianchi, Gino Capponi, Piero Fraticelli, Giambattista Giuliani, Luigi Paganucci, Cosimo Ridolfi, Atto Vannucci, and Guido Corsini.
46. ASCF, busta 4537, adunanza February 1, 1864.
47. *Ibid.*, buste 4531-34-38.
48. *Ibid.*, busta 4530, file 7, "Circolare del Municipio di Firenze," March 12, 1865.
49. Several unfinished lists exist in busta 4522.
50. Silvana Patriarca has studied the role of "patriotic statistics" in the construction of the Italian nation-state. Beginning with the premise that the representations of the social world themselves are constitutive of social reality and thus instruments of power, she discusses the ways in which statistics were used by the Italian patriots in Risorgimento Italy, as well as by the ruling elite during the first decade after unification. In the preunification period, "naming, counting, and portraying the nation-to-be were vital tasks, indissolubly part of (the struggle for national independence).... The statistical descriptions of Italy produced before the unification were an overt rhetorical weapon in the hands of the Italian reformers and patriots:...they aimed at establishing Italy's 'true' picture, and in some cases also constituted a precise political statement about the legitimacy and viability of the future nation"; in Patriarca, *Numbers and Nationhood*, 124-125. In postunification Italy, statistics became a powerful instrument of the ruling elite. By giving the abstract notion of the nation a concrete body, they turned the nation into an object to be known, governed by the state, and rationally administered; *ibid.*, chapter 6.
51. For a discussion of the polarity between *paese legale* and *paese reale* see Patruco, *The Critics of the Italian Parliamentary System*, 49; Zeffiro Ciufoletti, *Stato senza nazione. Disegno di storia del risorgimento e dell'unità d'Italia* (Naples: Morano, 1993), chapter 7.
52. One such letter is that of the Società dei Cappellai of Florence. The letter explains: "This society has existed since hats were invented and, even though it was persecuted by despotism, it always rose from its ashes, stronger than before, and more animated by its ideals of humanity and of progress. Its statute is imbued with morality and is supported by brotherly charity. It has a seat which guides it, a flag which distinguishes it, and everything that is necessary to be constituted as a *corpo morale*" ("la società esiste fin da quando incominciò ad usare il cappello, e benché perseguitata, e disfatta più di una volta dal dispotismo, risorse sempre più forte, più animata dal sentimento di umanità, e di progresso. Ha uno statuto che non scarseggia di moralità, ed è appoggiato sulla carità fraterna- un seggio che la guida, una bandiera che la distingue, e tutto quanto occorre per essere costituita in corpo morale"); ASCF, busta 4522, letter addressed to "Sig. Gonfaloniere e componenti il Municipio di Firenze," May 5, 1865.

53. *Giornale del Centenario* no. 50 (December 31, 1865): 411.
54. Published in Florence: Federigo Bencini, 1865.
55. These diplomas were printed by Stabilimento di F. Chiari, were dated May 14, 1865, and were signed by the Gonfaloniere of Florence.
56. The list of those receiving commemorative medals is recorded in a brown booklet in ASCF, busta 194, "Medaglie Centenario di Dante."
57. The cost of the medals amounted to 15,000 lire; ASCF, busta 4532, "Rendiconto."
58. ASCF, busta 194, "Municipio di Firenze, oggetto: medaglie commemorative del Centenario di Dante," July 1865. (...La gratitudine di questa città per le Deputazioni inviate da tutte le parti della penisola non potrebbe altrimenti venire espressa che coll'offrire a tante illustri rappresentanze, la medaglia commemorativa del centenario Dantesco, ricordo di una solennità, la cui memoria durerà per gl'Italiani, quanto duri quella del Poeta Sovrano.)
59. Several hundred of these letters are filed without any particular order in ASCF, busta 194, file 9.
60. ASCF, busta 194, "Municipio di Firenze, oggetto: medaglie commemorative del Centenario di Dante," July 1865.
61. *Ibid.*, busta 4035, hand-written letter by Corsini, May 31, 1866.
62. Orange pamphlet entitled *Catalogo delle bandiere e stendardi depositati nel R. museo di S. Marco dal municipio di Firenze e donati dalle rappresentanze delle provincie, accademie, università, istituti, società operaie* (Florence: Stabilimento Chiari, 1869); in ASCF, busta 4035.
63. ASCF, busta 4527, adunanza February 27, 1864. Also see ASCF, busta 194, file 10, adunanza of Municipio di Firenze, April 21, 1864.
64. Letter of Atto Vannucci, the president of the Commissione Fiorentina per il Centenario di Dante, reproduced in *Giornale del Centenario* no. 11 (May 20, 1864): 85.
65. *Ibid.*
66. *Ibid.*, 86–87.
67. *Giornale del Centenario* no. 20 (August 10, 1864): 149.
68. *Ibid.*
69. *Ibid.*
70. Ravenna's refusal to grant Dante's ashes to Florence is the subject of a poem entitled *Il gran rifiuto di Ravenna a Firenze e il sesto centenario: versi di Gabriele Fantoni* (Venice: P. Naratovich, 1865).
71. Barlow, *The Sixth Centenary Festivals of Dante*, 67–80.
72. For the Centenary Commission's discussion of the subject during its meetings, see ASCF, busta 4527, adunanza April 14, 1864. For a copy of the certificate of honorary citizenship see, ASCF, busta 194, file 10, "Municipio di Firenze," April 21, 1864. For a public announcement of the honorary citizenship see *Giornale del Centenario* no. 11 (May 20, 1864): 86–87.
73. *Giornale del Centenario* no. 11 (May 20, 1864): 87.

74. Piedmontese modernization and the establishment of a uniform system of administration had involved a progressive decline in the juridical status of the city: the locality, whether city, town or village, had been purged of past associations and replaced with a uniform institutional type, that of the commune. Fabio Rugge argues: "I would like to point out the strongly ideological character of the principle of uniformity in the name of which the abolition of cities is carried out in Italy. That principle is formally maintained against any proposal to mitigate its rigor; it is undoubtedly used to reject the proposal to divide the municipalities into categories..."; Fabio Rugge, "Le nozioni di città," 54.
75. Cited in Merrigi and Schiera, *Dalla città alla nazione*, 11.
76. "The only example of the survival of the term citizen in its original meaning of holder of a municipal citizenship seems to be the expression 'honorary citizen.' Yet, even here, as in the case of the title for a city, we are in the presence of a vestige, which doesn't build a bridge towards the past, but serves instead to underscore its collapse"; Rugge, "Le nozioni di città," 60.
77. Rugge remarks: "Already in 1837, with the sovereign ordinances of May 2, not only the concession of municipal citizenship, but even the attribution of the title of honorary citizen is submitted to a central control.... The abolition of the control coincides with the disappearance of any plausible juridical meaning of honorary municipal citizenship. And in fact, the municipal and provincial laws which were passed after 1850 will no longer be concerned with it"; *ibid.*, 61.
78. *Ibid.*, 55.
79. The phenomenon of the modernity of local and regional identity in Italy is the topic of a series of studies published in *Memoria e Ricerca* 6, no. 1 (1998). See especially Stefano Cavazza, "Regionalism in a Political Transition: 'la Pie' and the Cultural Identity of Romagna." Cavazza shows that the foundations of regional cultural identities, though with longer historical background, began in the nineteenth century.
80. *Atti del comitato promotore della esposizione dantesca* (Florence: Cellini, 1864), 8. A copy of the text can be found in ASCF, busta 4530. (Considerando come sia debito dei rappresentanti della Provincia il prender parte alle solenni onoranze che in Comune di Firenze si apparecchia a tributare alla memoria di Dante...; Considerando come una pubblica Esposizione di tutto ciò che ricordi il divino poeta...raccolte in ogni parte d'Italia, può acconciamente congiungere in questa solennità nazionale i rappresentanti di tutte le Provincie italiane.)
81. The letter to the Ministry reads: "Lord Minister, you are certainly aware of how much this stimulus will benefit, and how much better people will comprehend, the figure of Dante, a figure which for centuries we have struggled to portray in our own minds, thanks to this task of collecting the manuscripts, the books and everything else that might help to

make this figure visible as a single effigy. Many of these rare relics are unknown to most people, either because they are scattered or because the unfortunate division of our homeland prevented a closer sharing of our common treasure” (“Ora, Signor ministro, non può essere ignoto a lei quanto gioverà per tale incitamento, o per comprendere appieno l’idea di Dante, idea che da secoli ci affatichiamo di ben ritrarre nel nostro pensiero, questo raccogliere i codici, i libri, e quant’altro ce la renda come visibile in un’unica effigie. Molte di queste rarità sono ignote ai più perché sparse, o perché la misera divisione della patria nostra non consentì più intima comunicazione della comune ricchezza”); *Atti del comitato promotore della esposizione dantesca*, 14–15.

82. Consiglio Provinciale di Firenze, adunanza May 11, 1864.
83. *Giornale del Centenario* no. 11 (May 20, 1864), 90.
84. ASCF, busta 4530, letter of the Consiglio Provinciale di Firenze to the Municipio di Firenze, July 23, 1864.
85. *Atti del comitato promotrice della esposizione dantesca*, 17–18.
86. ASCF, buste 4526–27, adunanza June 21, 1864.
87. A proposal to sell the tickets for 5 lire was rejected on the grounds that the high price would limit the number of those who could participate; *ibid.*
88. ASCF, buste 4526–27, rapporto segretario August 19, 1864.
89. *Giornale del Centenario* no. 3 (February 29, 1864): 20. (Ma noi dicemmo a principio dovere anche il Governo prendere parte al gran Centenario; ed ora ecco quale sarebbe la nostra opinione sul proposito. Al Governo s’apparerebbe d’instituire dodici o quindici cattedre per tutto il Regno al solo scopo di interpretare Dante, le quali s’aprirebbero il dì fissato per la festa; ed ordinare che i primi Professori che le ottenessero fondassero un collegio, il quale, chiamando a sussidio le menti tutte d’Italia, si studiasse di dare due nuovi componimenti della Divina Commedia, l’uno scientifico, l’altro popolare; che il letterario s’è fatto già, ed anche troppo.... Che se poi il Governo non credesse suo compito questa istituzione, il che noi non vorremmo credere, allora suppliscano gli stessi Municipi.)
90. BNCF, *Atti Parlamentari*, Istruzione Pubblica, XIV.Ia.
91. *Giornale del Centenario* no. 20 (August 20, 1864): 157. (Voglio dire che una generosa concorenza sulle più degne discipline, fra gli studenti delle Università governative e libere e degli altri istituti superiori del Regno, sarebbe compimento bello ed acconcio alla festa d’uno dei più alti ingegni dell’età moderna.)
92. *Ibid.*, 158.
93. ASCF, Leggi e Decreti del Regno d’Italia, July 20, 1864 decree, entry 909, number 1853: “Considering that in May of next year, Dante’s sixth centenary will be celebrated in Florence and with regard to the proposal made by our Minister and State Secretary for Public Education, we

have agreed on the following: Article I) On the occasion of the festa for Dante's Centenary, a special contest will be started among the students and auditors of the year 1864-1865 of the free governmental universities of the kingdom, Florence's High School, Milan's Technical High School and Scientific-Literary Academy, Turin's and Naples' Engineering Schools.... Article IV) On 1 February of next year the contest will take place at each university and high school.... Article V) The contestants will present their sealed works to the director of the university in which they are participating, and the director will in turn hand them in to commissions elected by the minister in each university, or, in case there are no commissions.... Article VII) The author of the best composition from each faculty will be awarded a gold medal carrying Dante's effigy. The other two will receive a silver medal. The medals will be awarded in Florence on the day of Dante's Centenary. The names of the winners will be published in the Official Gazette of the kingdom" ("Considerando che nel prossimo maggio sarà celebrato in Firenze il vi centenario della nascita di Dante; Sulla proposta del Nostro Ministro Segretario di Stato per la Pubblica Istruzione; abbiamo determinato e determiniamo: articolo 1) nella occasione della festa del centenario di Dante è bandito un concorso straordinario fra gli studenti ed uditori dell'anno 1864-1865 delle Università governative libere del Regno, dell'istituto superiore di Firenze, dell'Istituto tecnico superiore e dell'accademia scientifico-letteraria di Milano, delle scuole d'applicazione per gli ingegneri di Torino e di Napoli.... Articolo IV) Il giorno primo del prossimo Febbraio si farà il concorso in ciascuna Università, ed in ciascuno degli altri istituti. Articolo V) I concorrenti presenteranno i loro lavori sigillati al capo della università presso cui concorrono, e questo li rimetterà a commissioni elette dal ministro in ciascuna università, o, dove queste non sono,.... Articolo VII) l'autore del componimento di ciascuna facoltà giudicato ottimo avrà in premio una medaglia d'oro improntata dell'effigie di Dante; gli altri due avranno una medaglia d'argento. Le medaglie si dispenseranno in Firenze il giorno del centenario di Dante; i nomi dei premiati saranno pubblicati nella gazzetta ufficiale del Regno").

94. *Giornale del Centenario* no. 40 (March 10, 1865): 318.
95. ASCE, Leggi e Decreti del Regno d'Italia, March 4, 1865, entries 341–343, number 2229.
96. *Ibid.*, article 1: "the lyceums of the kingdom, described in the chart enclosed in the present decree and signed per our request by the Minister of Public Education, will take on the denomination which is assigned to each of them on the chart itself" ("i licei regii, descritti nella tabella unita al presente decreto, e firmata d'ordine nostro dal ministro per la pubblica istruzione, assumeranno la denominazione che nella tabella stessa a ciascuno viene assegnata").



97. Ibid., article 2: "On 17 March of each year every lyceum will celebrate, with the intervention of the local school board, of the faculty and of the students of the classical and technical secondary schools, a literary festa which will commemorate the greatest Italian writers and thinkers" ("Alli diciassette di marzo d'ogni anno si celebrerà in ciascun liceo, con l'intervento delle autorità scolastiche locali, del corpo insegnante e degli alunni delle scuole secondarie classiche e tecniche, una festa letteraria commemorativa dei più grandi scrittori e pensatori italiani").
98. One such school was the Liceo Faenza, which assumed the name Liceo Torricelli. The school was founded only five years earlier, in August 1860, through an act of the Ministry of Public Education of the Kingdom of Sardinia. The following is a description of the festa at this school appearing on the website of the Scuole Faenza ([http://www.racine.ra.it/ictoricelli/st\\_liceo.htm](http://www.racine.ra.it/ictoricelli/st_liceo.htm)): "...annual literary festa...used to constitute an important moment in the life of the lyceum. Every year a famous Italian writer of the past would be selected to be celebrated; in his honor some of the students would read one of their compositions in the presence of the major local authorities. The compositions could be in prose or in verse, in Italian, Latin, or Greek. Among the authors celebrated were Foscolo (1868), Galilei (1870), Botta (1873)" ("...festa letteraria annuale...costituiva un momento importante della vita del liceo. Ogni anno si sceglieva di celebrare un illustre scrittore italiano del passato; in suo onore alcuni alunni leggevano un loro componimento alla presenza delle maggiori autorità cittadine. I componimenti potevano essere in prosa o in versi, in italiano, in latino, o in greco. Furono celebrati Foscolo (1868), Galilei (1870), Botta (1873)").
99. La Festa di Dante no. 3 (May 15, 1864): 16.
100. La Festa di Dante no. 48 (March 26, 1865): 192.
101. Giornale del Centenario no. 22 (September 10, 1864): 180.
102. Giornale del Centenario no. 4 (March 10, 1864): 32.
103. La Festa di Dante no. 1 (May 1, 1864): 4.
104. La Festa di Dante no. 47 (March 19, 1865): 188.
105. ASCF, busta, 4035, file 5.
106. Giornale del Centenario no. 10 (May 10, 1864): 84.
107. Giornale del Centenario no. 17 (July 20, 1864): 140.
108. A complete bibliography of publications in honor of the Centenary does not exist. My search included the bibliography appearing in the *Enciclopedia dantesca* (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1970–1978), 601–603; to publications appearing in the contemporary journals in Florence; the Centenary Literary Commission's files at the ASCF; as well as the material preserved in the Collection of Rare Manuscripts in the Cornell University Library.
109. Referring to the quality of publication in honor of the Centenary, Dionisotti remarks: "the medley of studies on Dante and his century

- appears qualitatively important even today”; Dionisotti, *Geografia*, 280.
110. Referring to the quantity of publications inspired by the Centenary, Dionisotti remarks, “throughout the centuries-old history of Italian poetry it is not easy to find anything similar to that...”; *ibid*, 282.
  111. ASCF, Consiglio Generale (1864–1865), adunanza February 20, 1864; see also, busta 194, file 10, Municipio di Firenze, adunanza February 20, 1864. The notice also appears in *Giornale del Centenario* no. 3 (February 29, 1864): 17. The notice reads: “...A request that the Municipality of Florence sponsor a work which the above-mentioned gentlemen (Cellini and Ghivizzani) intend to publish for Dante’s festa; a work which Italy’s most distinguished scholars have collaborated on, and which will come to be a truly solemn homage to the greatest literary scholars still living among us in memory of the Divine Poet” (“...Una domanda di patrocinio per parte del Municipio Fiorentino ad un’opera per la festa dantesca che i detti signori (Cellini and Ghivizzani) si propongono di pubblicare; opera alla quale concorrono i più eletti ingegni d’Italia e che verrebbe ad essere un omaggio certamente solenne delle più grandi illustrazioni letterarie viventi fra noi alla memoria di quel Divino”); see also ASCF, busta 194, file 11 for a report of the Florentine Municipality approving the sum of 2,000 lire subsidizing various copies of work published by Cellini.
  112. *Dante e il suo secolo*, XIV maggio MDCCCLXV (Florence: Cellini, 1865). The contributions to the volume include: Cesare Cantù, “L’Europa nel secolo di Dante”; Luigi Cibrario, “Condizione economica d’Italia ai tempi di Dante”; Luigi Passerini, “Della famiglia di Dante”; Mauro Ricci, “La religione e la pietà di Dante”; Pagano Paganini, “La teologia di Dante”; Terenzio Mamiani, “Della politica di Dante Alighieri”; Giuseppe Puccianti, “Allegoria di Beatrice”; Giulia Molino Colombini, “Le donne nel poema di Dante”; Carlo Minutoli, “Gentucca e gli altri lucchesi nominati nella Divina Comedia”; Sivestro Centofanti, “La civiltà e la poesia nella Divina Comedia”; Augusto Conti, “La filosofia di Dante”; Niccolò Tommaseo, “Il Veltro”; Vincenzo Di Giovanni, “Gli Angeli nella Divina Comedia”; Francesco Domenico Guerrazzi, “I donnatì”; Giambattista Giuliani, “Dante”; Luigi Tasti, “Gli ordini religiosi nella Divina Comedia”; Gino Capponi, “Il popolo di Toscana al tempo di Dante”; Vito Fornari, “Del convivio di Dante Alighieri”; Enrico Mayer, “La famiglia nel secolo di Dante”; Giulio Carbone, “Della costituzione topografica di Firenze nel secolo di Dante”; Giovanni Antonelli, “Accenni alle dottrine astronomiche nella Divina Comedia”; Roberto De Visiani, “Accenni alle scienze botaniche nella Divina Comedia”; Salvatore de Renzi, “La medicina in Italia ai tempi di Dante”; Francesco Carrara, “Accenni alle scienze penali nella Divina Comedia”; Lorenzo N. Pareto, “Cenni geologici intorno alla Divina Comedia”; Iacopo Bernardi, “Dante

- e la Bibbia”; Pietro Selvatico, “Delle arti belle in relazione a Dante”; Giuseppe Fracassetti, “Dante e il Petrarca”; Giulio Carcano, “Dante e Shakespeare”; Raffaello Lambruschini, “Che cosa intendesse Dante per idioma illustre, cardinale, aulico, curiale”; Angelo Cavalieri, “Del volgare eloquio di Dante Alighieri in relazione al secentesimo anniversario della sua nascita”; Giuseppe Ignazio Montanari, “Omero, Virgilio, e Dante Alighieri”; Michele Ferrucci, “La latinità di Dante”; Giosuè Carducci, “Delle Rime di Dante Alighieri”; Ariodante Fabretti, “Analogia dell’antica lingua italiana con la greca, la latina e co’ dialetti viventi a illustrare il libro della volgare eloquenza di Dante Alighieri”; Jacopo Ferrazzi, “Della prosa di Dante comparata a quelle degli altri prosatori del suo tempo”; Niccolò Barozzi, “Accenni a cose venete nel poema di Dante”; Alessandro Cappi, “Dante in Ravenna”; Francesco Dall’Ongaro, “Bellezza drammatica della Divina Comedia”; Corrado Gargioli, “La Divina Comedia e l’Arnaldo da Brescia”; Bartolomeo Aquarone, “Accenni alle cose senesi (inf. X e XXXII) nel poema di Dante”; Francesco Palermo, “Sulle varianti ne’ testi della Divina Comedia”; Silvestro Centofanti, “Dante autore e maestro alla Italia della sua nazionale letteratura.”
113. ASCF, busta 194, file 11, “Manifesto di un’opera per Centenario di Dante Alighieri,” 2. (davanti Lui non vi sono fazioni, né divisioni di parte; non vi ha che l’Italia, che è in Lui esemplata, e che vorrà sempre specchiarsi in Lui, a ricomporre le Sue membra e pigliarne abito degno; l’Italia che tutti riunisce nel suo nome. E così tutti concordi all’opera, noi possiamo oggimai dare il disegno del libro....)
  114. Guida ufficiale per le feste del centenario di Dante Alighieri nei giorni 14, 15, 16 maggio 1865 in Firenze (Florence: Cellini, 1865).
  115. Published in Florence by B. Saldini, 1865.
  116. Published in Florence by Bettini, 1865. The work includes the following contributions: Niccolò Tommaseo, “Al popolo”; Gaetano Milanese, “De’ ritratti antichi di Dante che furono o sono in Firenze”; Isidoro del Lungo, “Vita di Dante”; G. E. Saltini, “Memorie di Dante in Firenze”; Pietro Dazzi, “Il monumento”; G. E. Saltini, “Del tempio e della piazza di S. Croce.”
  117. Published in Florence by Barbéra, 1865. The work includes contributions from: Pietro Cossa, “Inno”; and Federico Napoli, “Il poeta civile.”
  118. Published in Florence: Murate, 1865. The volume includes contributions by Pietro Rossi, “Vita di Dante Alighieri”; Giuseppe Maffei, “La Divina Comedia esposta dal Cav. G.M.”; Giuseppe Di Cesare, “Esame della Divina Comedia di Dante.”
  119. ASCF, buste 4526-27, adunanza June 21, 1864.
  120. ASCF, buste 4526-27, rapporto segretario June 21, 1864.
  121. *Giornale del Centenario* no. 3 (February 29, 1864): 19.
  122. Albo dantesco nella sesta commemorazione centenaria offerto da Mantova al nome del poeta nazionale italiano (Mantova: L. Segna,

- 1865). Contributions to this volume include Ariodante Cogdri, "Epigrafi commemorative"; Carlo d'Arco, "Documenti che ricordano Sordello ed un detrattore di D. A. ed alcune notizie intorno Francesco Gonzaga marchese di Mantova"; Anselmo Guerrieri Gonzaga, "Una scena del Fausto di W. Goethe (traduz.)"; Innocenzo Frigeri, "I simboli delle tre fiere del sacro poema"; A. Mainardi, "Di un sonetto di Dante. Lettere del conte Giovanni Arrivabene al signor Luigi Foldrini"; Willelmo Braghirolli, "Mantova a Dante il 14 maggio 1865 (sonetto)"; Innocenzo Frigeri, "Significato della Beatrice di Dante in reazione ad altri simboli del sacro poema"; Ippolito Nievo, "L'ultimo esilio (versi)"; Gregorio Ottoni, "Dante medico"; Emanuele Civita, "Iscrizioni"; Antonio Codogni, "A Dante. Sonetto"; Willelmo Braghirolli, "Cenno intorno ai tre codici mantovani; Attilio Portioli, Di due ritratti di Dante esistenti in Mantova"; Angelo Poma, "A Mantova; Giuseppe Quintavalle, Disegno d'un Pantheon da erigersi in Mantova a Dante, a Virgilio, a Sordello, ed ai più illustri mantovani."
123. Sesto centenario della nascita di Dante Alighieri (Milan: G. Agnelli, 1865). Contributions to this volume include; Anonimo, "Manifestazioni spiritiste intorno al cattolicesimo di Dante; Michelangelo Smania, "Prefazione"; G. L. Patuzzi, "Dante, Statua di Ugo Zannoni"; Carlo Belviglieri, "Dante a Verona"; Luigi Faiter, "Dante Allighieri e la lingua d'Italia"; Filippo Scolari, "Intorno agli aneddoti alla via di Dante Alighieri"; Giovan Battista Oppi, "Osservazioni sulla teorica della pena studiata in Dante"; Ettore Scipione Righi, "Della vita e delle opere di Torquato Della Torre scultore veronese"; Micheangelo Asson, "La filosofia di D. Allighieri"; Cesare Cavattoni, "Documenti fin qua rimasti inediti che riguardano alcuni de' posterì di Dante Alighieri"; Giovanni Battista Corniani, "Notizie storiche intorno alla vita di Dante"; Ferdinando Arrivabene, "Squadri del secolo di Dante."
124. Ateneo di Treviso. Solenne tornata nel sesto centenario di Dante. 14 maggio 1865 (Treviso: Andreola-Medesin, 1865). Contributions to this volume include: Francesco Zambaldi, "Dante e la lingua italiana"; Giovanni Battista De Zen, "Influenza delle condizioni politiche e sociali sul Genio di Dante"; Giambattista Rambalki, "Dante e Trevigi"; Faustino Bonaventura, "Inno a Dante."
125. Componimenti di prosa e poesia relativi a Dante Alighieri, e in onore di esso, pubblicati dalla Società di Minerva in Trieste (Trieste: C. Coen, 1866); Giovanni Tagliapietra, "La D. C. in relazione con le arti figurative"; E. Tagliapietra, "Un'ora di Dante a Ravenna"; F. Tedeschi, "Pel sesto centenario di Dante"; F. Rossi, "Sonetto."
126. Dante e Padova. Studi storico-critici (Padova: Prosperini, 1865). Contributions to this volume include: Andrea Gloria, "Sulla dimora di Dante in Padova"; Enrico Salvagnini, "Jacopo da Sant'Andrea e i Feudatari del Padovano"; Giuseppe Dalla Vedova, "Gli argini del

- Brenta al tempo di Dante; Pietro Selvatico, *Visita di Dante a Giotto nell'Oratorio degli Scrovegni*"; Emilio Morpurgo, "I prestatori di danaro al tempo di Dante"; Giuseppe De Leva, "Gli Estensi ricordati dall'Alighieri"; Giacomo Zanella, "Guerre fra Padovani e Vicentini al tempo di Dante"; Antonio Tolomei, "Del Volgare illustre in Padova al tempo di Dante e delle vicende del vernacolo padovano"; Andrea Cittadella Vigodarzere, "Di tre disegni a penna del pittore padovano Vincenzo Gazzotto e di altri rinomati illustratori della D. C."; Domenico Barbaran, "Illustrazione di quattro codici della Divina Comedia esistenti nel seminario vescovile di Padova"; Enrico Salvagnini, "Cunizza da Romano, Pierina Scrovegni e le donne padovane al tempo di Dante."
127. Dante e Vicenza, XIV maggio MDCCCLXV (Vicenza: Academia Olimpica, 1865). Contributions to this volume include: Jacopo Cabianca, "Per la solenne inaugurazione del busto di Dante Alighieri nel Museo Civico di Vicenza il XIV Maggio MDCCCLXV"; Bernardo Morsolin, "Degli studi di Giangiorgio Trissino su Dante"; Fedele Lampertico, "Dei gatti d'arme combattuti al palude e del vescovo Andrea de' Mozzi. Commento alla terzina 16 del c. IX del Paradiso e alla 38 del c. XV dell'Inferno"; Giacomo Zanella, "A Dante Alighieri. Versi"; Antonio Negrin, "Di un monumento a Dante Alighieri."
  128. Discorsi pubblicamente letti in Verona compendosi il sesto centenario della nascita di Dante Alighieri (Verona: Vincentini e Franchini, 1865). Contributions to this volume include: Giulio Camuzzoni, "Orazione inaugurale del monumento di Dante Alighieri recitata nelle sale del Civico Museo"; Alessandro Pandian, "Discorso letto sotto il titolo di "Conclusione" la sera dell'11 maggio."
  129. Festa del Sesto Centenario della nascita di Dante Alighieri celebrata il giorno 21 maggio 1865 nelle sale teatrali della Società veneta filodrammatica residente in Venezia (Venice: Chicchini, 1865); Natalizio di Dante Alighieri dopo seicento anni festeggiato dall'Istituto di scienze, lettere ed arti e dalla città di Venezia (Venice: Antonelli, 1865).
  130. Omaggio a Dante Alighieri offerto ai cattolici italiani nel maggio 1865, sesto centenario della sua nascita (Rome: Monaldi, 1865). Contributions to this volume include: Francesco Berardinelli, "Ragionamento intorno al vero senso allegorico della Divina Comedia"; Bartolomeo Sorio, "Concetto politico del poema sacro di Dante"; Luigi Crisostomo Ferrucci, "Lettura sul canto primo dell'Inferno della Divina Comedia"; Mauro Ricci, "Dante e Lutero"; Giambattista Marcucci, "Dante mostrato paladino della Monarchia temporale del romano pontefice"; Guglielmo Audisio, "La mente vera di Dante"; Matteo Liberatore, "La filosofia della Divina Comedia di Dante Alighieri"; Tito Pietro Laviano, "Dante Alighieri e la politica dei Ghibellini"; Francesco M. Torricelli di Torricella, "Il Veltro"; Salvatore Murena, "Dante e la sua politica"; Pio Giuseppe Capri, "La Vergine nella Divina Comedia"; Celestino

- Cavedoni, "L'orazione domenicale parafrasata da Dante Alighieri nel canto XI del Purgatorio esposta co' riscontri delle divine scritture e de' Santi padri della chiesa"; Luigi della Vecchia, "Ugolini comitis mors"; Francesca Ariminensis, "Matilda"; Filippo Scolari, "Due documenti, XVIII novembre MCCCII, di autorità pontificia necessarii al retto studio della Divina Comedia"; Celestino Masetti, "Illustrazione storico-filologica della epigrafe sepolcrale di Martino e Jacopo del Cassero esistente in Fano nella Chiesa di S. Domenico"; Luigi Bennassuti, "Di due frutti speciali che si deono cogliere dalla Divina Comedia"; Edoardo Arborio-Mella, "Il poema di Dante ispiratore delle arti rappresentative."
131. Società di letture giovanili per lo sesto centenario di Dante Alighieri, discorsi pronunziati nella seduta straordinaria del 15 maggio 1865 (Catania: Caronda, 1865). Contributions to this volume include: Giorgio Morin, "Dante"; Natale Condorelli Beneventano, "Dante ed il suo volgare linguaggio"; Francesco Chiarenza, "Sul fine religioso della Divina Commedia."
  132. In a March 19 letter, the *Giornale del Centenario* announced the publication of a new edition of the Divine Comedy by Luciano Scarabelli; *Giornale del Centenario* no. 30 (November 3, 1864): 242.
  133. ASCF, busta 4035: "Strenna dantesca (raccolta di Poesie scelte in onore di Dante dai suoi tempi ai nostri giorni) e varie poesie"; Professor Antonio Gualberto De Marzo, *Italia e Dante: Carme* (Florence: Grazzini, 1865); a long poem "Un verso della comedia di Dante"; as well as a verse in Arabic. Busta 4035, folder 2: Cavagnari dedicates to the Florentine municipality a new edition of the Divine Comedy, published in Parma, with photographic designs.
  134. Approximately 120 of these texts can be found in ASCF, busta 4537. These include a printed pamphlet *Un monumento a Dante* (Trani: Sante Cannone e figli, 1865); an ornate pamphlet by Professor Luigi Caputi, "A Fiorenza: Canto del centenario," April 16, 1865; a poem by G. B. Colin, professor at the Scuola Tecnica, April 10, 1865; Gioacchino Stampacchia of Ancona, decorated pink pamphlet, May 24, 1865; an elaborate manuscript from Reggio, "A Dante Alighieri, Canzone di Giovanni Vecchi," accompanied by a letter of Niccolò Tommaseo; Girolamo Molinari, "Canto per la festa"; a printed framed page by Federigo Cesi, "A Dante Alighieri in occasione della festa centenaria, sonetto"; Tribunal de Premiere de Libourne sends a printed pamphlet, "Dante Alighieri (1857)"; the Società Anonima Beni Demaniali a Firenze sent a hand written sonnet of prose poetry, "Dante all'Italia"; and finally, a large pamphlet "A Sa Majeste Le Roi d'Italie, Inauguration de la Statue de Dante Alighieri à Florence" by Alphonse Darnauli, August 8, 1864.
- Numerous others appear in busta 4035, file 5. These include: Antonio Gualberto De Marzo, *Italia e Dante: Carme* (Florence:

Tipografia Grazzini Giannini, 1865); La rappresentanza dei comuni della Garfagnana alle feste del sesto Centenario di Dante Alighieri in Firenze: Relazione del sotto prefetto (Lucca: Tipo. Giuseppe Giusti, 1865); Un verso della comedia di Dante (Milan: Istituto Lombardo di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, August 17, 1854).

Busta 4530, file 2 contains still other works: Cavagnari dedicates to the Florentine municipality a new edition of the *Divine Comedy*, published in Parma and including photographic illustrations. Finally, busta 4536 contains an advertisement for a pamphlet entitled *Chi era Dante*.

135. ASCF, busta 4537, file 3.
136. An example of contributions from unknown authors is a handwritten manuscript of Carlo Poggi-Laborcena, "Religione, politica e meccanica." He sent the twelve-page manuscript, requesting that the Commission publish the work, since he himself did not have the resources to do so; ASCF, busta 4035.
137. ASCF, busta 194, files 10 and 11, contain more of these texts: a booklet entitled *XIV Maggio MDCCCLXV* was published in Trieste to benefit the needy students of the Ginnasio Comunale Superiore; another pamphlet, *Inaugurazione della lapide commemorativa apposta alla villa di Dante Alighieri a Camerata per cura del municipio di Fiesole*, was published by Cellini and reproduced in *La Gioventù* (July 1865); another pamphlet came from the students of the University of Zurich, entitled *Saluto e augurio di felicità della Università di Zurigo alla città di Firenze in occasione del Centenario di Dante*.
138. Referring to the poetry written for Dante at the time of the Centenary, Dionisotti remarks: "It is important to notice the quantity of this phenomenon. Throughout the centuries-old history of Italian poetry it is not easy to find anything similar..."; Dionisotti, 282.
139. *Ibid.*, 281.
140. It is notable that in 1879, the city of Turin reclaims this privileged position of the "hub" for Italian municipalities, when mayor of Turin sponsors the first meeting of the Association of Italian Communes (*Associazione dei comuni italiani*) in that city in 1879. See Gaspari, *L'Italia dei municipi*, 10–11.

### 3 "Carnevalino" or "Cold Official Discourse": The Program of the Festa

1. ASCF, busta 4537 contains more than a dozen drafts of the program, written during the various stages of its revision.
2. *Programma per la festa nazionale del sesto centenario di Dante Alighieri che dovrà aver luogo in Firenze dal 14 al 21 Maggio 1865* (Florence: Cellini, 1864).

3. *Guida ufficiale per le feste del centenario di Dante Alighieri nei giorni 14, 15 e 16 maggio 1865 in Firenze* (Florence: Cellini, 1865).
4. ASCF, busta 4527, adunanza December 19, 1864.
5. ASCF, busta 4527, rapporto segretario December 19, 1864. (Si è molto detto, molto si dice e più si dirà sulla natura e sul carattere di festa che devono onorare il primo fra l'italiani; ma ove ai cupidi di cose nuove venisse richiesto di ideare e di formulare in che possa consistere quella novità che tanto e sempre desiderano, troveremmo che non saprebbero darvi risposta, e che è più agevole il desiderare che l'ottenere, specialmente nelle cose umane e riguardo alle novità non essendoci, come dice un antica sentenza, nulla di nuovo sotto il sole. Né la sottocommissione poteva certamente godere di questo privilegio inventivo che nessuno possiede, quindi il suo compito veniva determinato non nell'immaginare cose impossibili, ma seguendo le esigenze della società moderna, nel combinare queste, e nell'innestarle come più e meglio si poteva all'antico, che si vuol richiamare nella Solennità centenaria.)
6. Ibid. The report reads: "[...] that the program of these feste should be left open to possible developments, and that it should allow for the initiative and ambition of the various social classes of citizens who will come, each on their appointed day, to honor the Poet, so that everyone can equally show their commitment toward this national celebration" ("[...]che il programma di queste feste debba essere suscettibile di tale sviluppo e debba lasciare tanta parte all'iniziativa ed all'amore proprio delle varie classi di cittadini concorrenti ciascuno nel suo giorno ad onorare il Poeta, che tutti possono con eguale larghezza mostrare il loro zelo per la solennità nazionale.")
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. ASCF, busta 4527, rapporto segretario 19 December 1864. (Sembra dunque che il carattere generale delle feste e la stretta connessione che hanno fra loro sia conforme a quanto imponeva il concetto di una solennità che si celebra per la prima volta e che a noi non sarà dato di più rivedere[...]. Vien primo l'elemento popolare, che più ci richiama ai tempi del Poeta, e che forma la forza della nazione dacchè i plebisciti consacrano.)
14. A copy of the pamphlet entitled *In occasione del Sesto Centenario di Dante Alighieri, programma delle feste da eseguirsi in Firenze ideato da Stefano Fioretti*, can be found in ASCF, busta 4532.
15. *Programma per la festa nazionale*, 5.
16. ASCF, busta 4526, adunanza December 21, 1864. (che gli antichi più religiosi di noi potevano fare grandi feste, delle quali noi non siamo più



capaci, che i balli non sono convenienti, che incoronare la statua colossale del poeta diventa ridicolo, che infine le feste che li propongono sono mascherate e nulla più.)

17. Ibid.
18. Ibid. (...esso (Ridolfi) non ha mai desiderato che una festa, l'inaugurazione del monumento [osserva] alla S.Commissione che esso teme il ridicolo, il quale, specialmente in questa città, si appiglia alle più gravi cose; nonostante ringrazia la S.Commissione delle sue premure nel proporre un programma che essa stimava degno della circostanza[...].)
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
21. The public letter is published in *Giornale del Centenario* no. 33 (December 31, 1864): 261.
22. *La Festa di Dante* no. 35 (December 25, 1864): 137.
23. Ibid. (Nonostante, siccome sull'abbozzo imprudentemente divulgato avemmo occasione di sentire più d'un parere, crediamo sia dovere della stampa di dire il suo più chiaramente che può; ed è per questo che ci proponiamo di svolgere tutte le idee che abbiamo su questo grave argomento.)
24. Ibid., 137–138. (Ma i positivisti, che spesso non hanno di positivo che il vuoto del loro cervello, vengono fuori e vi gridano che il popolo non può stare otto giorni senza lavorare, che tante feste lo divagano non solo, ma lo svolgono e lo guastano....)
25. The editors of the journal kept forgetting that the Florentine habit of feasting was not totally germane since Florentines were not the only Italians participating in the Festa. This kind of slippage, especially after the editors' apology for having originally subtitled the journal *Lecture domenicali del popolo fiorentino* rather than *popolo italiano*, indicates the obstinate municipalism of the organizers of the Centenary.
26. "A despotic authority wanted us divided: freedom has reunited us so that we learn to know each other and so that we see that the Italian people must respect and love each other" ("L'autorità dispotica ci volle divisi; la libertà ci riunisce perchè ci conosciamo e vediamo quanto tutti i popoli d'Italia hanno ragione di stimarsi e di amarsi scambievolmente"); *La Festa di Dante* no. 37 (January 8, 1865): 142.
27. The original Italian phrase is "un freddo discorso ufficiale"; *La Festa di Dante* no. 37 (January 8, 1865): 145.
28. For a discussion of the Festa San Giovanni in late medieval Florence, see Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence*.
29. Quoted in Fioretti, *In occasione*, 2.
30. *La Festa di Dante* no. 40 (January 29, 1865): 157.
31. "Nowadays, we unfortunately see some indecent masquerades, which are unworthy of a civilized people.... We have seen young men, who

did not even belong to the lowest social classes, shamelessly dressed in women's clothes, and walking in the streets in broad daylight without even a mask on; and we have often seen others dressed as robbers and bandits, and even as madmen..." ("Noi vediamo pur troppo, ai tempi nostri, delle mascherate indecenti, e indegne di un popolo civile... Noi abbiamo veduto giovani e non dell'ultima classe della società, non vergognarsi a indossare vesti femminili, e senza maschera al viso percorrere le vie della città anche di giorno; ne abbiamo veduti e ne vediamo altri sovente vestiti da briganti e da masnadieri, ed anche da pazzi"); *La Festa di Dante* no. 41 (February 5, 1865): 161.

32. *Ibid.*, 162.
33. *Ibid.*, 165.
34. During the meetings of the Commission, Giuseppe Poggi was the most ardent proponent of the suppression of the *corsi di gala*: "Signor Poggi...raising the question of the doubtful success of the proposed races" ("Sig. Poggi...movendo inaltro la questione sull'incertezza del buon esito del corso proposto"); ASCF, busta 4527, adunanza January 23, 1865.
35. *La Festa di Dante* no. 42 (February 12, 1865): 166.
36. *Ibid.* (Dignità sembrava anzi grandissima l'aver suggerito per queste feste popolari il modo di rendere le dimostrazioni festive e gli spettacoli meno indegni della circostanza solenne; che se verranno lasciati in balia della plebe, o abbandonati al capriccio d'impresari e speculatori[...]. Vedremo forse rappresentazioni indegne, se non della civiltà, almeno non opportune, nè accomodate al tempo in che si celebra la memoria del divino Alighieri. Ma quanti uomini celebri, ma quante idee felici non dovettero soccombere agli attacchi di una *consorteria*!)
37. ASCF, busta 4526, adunanza January 23, 1865.
38. BNCF, Sala Manoscritti, carte varie 27, 255. The file contains two letters: Enrico Poggi's letter dated December 25, 1864, and Fraticelli's response dated December 28, 1864.
39. *Ibid.* (Ciò che più mi ha sdegnato in quel programma è quell'insieme di commemorazioni e festeggiamenti tutti municipali e repubblicani; quasichè Dante fosse distinto e rimarchevole per municipalismo e spiriti repubblicani; quasichè poi fosse questo il tempo opportuno di festeggiare queste due idee.)
40. (Dante è un genio universale, è un genio che ha voluto abbracciare e conciliare insieme la società civile e la religiosa. Dante come italiano è grandissimo, perché ha voluto sempre incarnare i due concetti dell'unità nazionale e della monarchia italiana, predicando rispetto a Roma la separazione del temporale dallo spirituale con un pò più di fede di quel che non l'hanno certi uomini politici, i quali più che alla separazione mirano alla distruzione del temporale e dello spirituale insieme. Ora Dante rappresentava largamente e pienamente il nostro risorgimento e le

future nostre aspirazioni, e trova in un sire di Casa Savoia quell'Alberto tedesco, quel Veltro che invano cercava e invano profetava vicino ai tempi suoi; pel bene della civiltà italica e della religione.)

41. (E se il Re sarà costà in quel tempo, com'è probabile che vi sia se vi sarà lì? Governo nazionale italiano, non si sentirà il controsenso, e meglio stranamento di tante reminiscenze che non hanno nesso col presente stato delle cose nostre? E che esprimerebbero una puerile vanità fiorentina? I Lombardi non ci capirebbero nulla e tolto Dante rimarrebbero indifferenti verso tutti gli altri nomi dell'epoca repubblicana che gli si mette[...], come rimango indifferente io a sentir quà portare alle stelle certe glorie e celebrità prevalentemente milanesi. I Piemontesi poi ripetono in casa quel che hanno già detto in parlamento; noi lo dicevamo, in Toscana non vi sono tradizioni monarchiche, in effetti, le memorie son tutte repubblicane e municipali.)
42. (*Neppure oggi* che la Casa di Savoia, onore e gloria di tutta Italia, si reca in Firenze a prendervi stanza e a concretare il gran pensiero dell'Esule Magnamino, si dà segno di volere onorare nell'altissimo poeta qualche cosa più che un cittadino fiorentino.)
43. ([...] canta Firenze[...] si aspiri a concetti larghi ed eminentemente italiani, si abbandonano le memorie di campanile e puramente autonome; nonche di gloriore del medio evo. L'esilio fece di Dante un cittadino di pressochè tutte le parti d'Italia; frugando nelle memorie della sua vita si possono trovare gesta degne d'esser commemorate meglio assai di alcuni fatti storici unicamente fiorentini[...]. Vorrei che Firenze ispirasse dei nuovi destini e gettasse da parte ogni rimasuglio di vita autonoma e piccinina. Si dilati col pensiero, con le memorie, con gli affetti, e si cerchi di abbracciare tutta l'Italia; non parli più dei suoi monumenti e dei più grandi uomini, che saranno d'ora innanzi celebrati dai non Toscani[...] tutti i giorni, ma si occupi invece delle glorie e delle grandezze delle altre province, fra le quali primissima è quella della dinastia che ci viene di Piemonte.)
44. Ibid.
45. See Fraticelli's correspondence in BNCF as well as in the Dante Centenary archives in ASCF. An example of this bluntness is a April 28, 1865, letter to Guido Corsini found in the latter archive. Upon learning that the epigraphs written for the occasion of the Centenary use the phrase "Glory of Italy" to describe the Accademia della Crusca, Fraticelli writes to complain. Avoiding all formalities, he starts the letter in the following manner: "several colleagues of mine found out that in an inscription [...] in some street on the occasion of the Centenary, the Accademia della Crusca is called 'glory of Italy'[...]. The Accademia rejects this qualification, and all the more so since the public knows that three members belong to the Municipal Centenary Commission, and that they, too, participated in writing these inscriptions" ("vari miei colleghi hanno

- saputo che in un' epigrafe [...]in non so quale strada in occasione del centenario, l' Accademia della Crusca è chiamata 'gloria d'Italia' [...]. L'accademia rifiuta questa qualificazione, tanto più che il pubblico sa come tre accademici fanno parte della commissione municipale del centenario, e che anche essi hanno dato opera alle epigrafi"); ASCF, busta 4535.
46. In an 1860 letter, Fraticelli thanks Gino Capponi for the intervention on his behalf; BNCF, Sala Manoscritti, carte Capponi VII, 11.
  47. (Carissimo Sig. Enrico, Quasi quasi io credeva che ella si fosse dimenticato di me, dico quasi quasi per attenuare l'espressione, inquantochè non è molto tempo che io ricevei i suoi saluti dal Bianchi.)
  48. (Quando l'altro giorno mi perveniva quella sua bella lettera del 25 e quella lettera io non so dirle quanto grata mi sia pervenuta; perciocchè se ella, sig. Enrico, è un vero Italiano, credo che io non sono da meno di Lei; e (mi permetta che lo dica) non lo sono per qualche mira secondaria, perchè a me non resta nulla da desiderare; ma lo sono perchè io illustratore e biografo di Dante, voglio come Dante, la grandezza d'Italia; la quale senza l'unità, senza la nazionalità, senza l' indipendenza, senza la libertà, non sarebbe.)
  49. (Veniamo ora all'argomento della sua lettera. Io combattei lungamente ed acremente il noto mostruoso programma proposto per la festa di Dante, 1) perchè secondo quel programma non si festeggiava solo Dante, ma altri sedici personaggi, come Giani Della Bella, Michele di Lando, Guido Cavalcanti, il Forraccio ec.ec. che nulla avevan a che fare colla festa del Centenario del Gran Poeta. 2) perchè non si poteva né si doveva evocare dalla storia memorie tristi, quali erano appunto le ire di parte e le battaglie fratricide degli avi nostri; e che volendo rappresentare quei fatti sopra una piazza, si cadeva nel ridicolo, e non si facevano che rappresentazioni sceniche e pagliacciate. E non solamente si deve anzi evitare le memorie tristi ma [anche] quelle che sotto immagini di pompa richiamaivano all'idea memorie di vassallaggio fra città e città [...]. 3) perché volendo estendere la durata delle feste a otto giorni, non si riduceva la cosa che ad un carnevalino, e tutto diventava un vero bacchanale; cosa indegna di quel che volevasi festeggiare; 4) perché in un tempo[...] il Comune aveva imprese sulle braccia e necessarie e urgenti, e mentre scarseggiava assai di denaro, sarebbe stato follia gettare una somma ingente [...].)
  50. (Io cercai sempre di tener alta la discussione, non lasciandomi trascinare a quello che tentavano i miei avversari, cioè alla minuta analisi di ciascheduna festa particolare proposta, e vi riuscii. Ma non avrei potuto, nè sarebbe stato allora conveniente, innalzarmi fino al punto accennatomi nella sua gratissima, perchè sarebbe stato un punto troppo delicato, e tale certamente, che avrebbe nell'assemblea suscitato una tempesta. Ed allora non si concludeva più, mentre io volevo concludere, e conclusi.

Se peraltro gli avversari nella prossima adunanza me ne porgeranno il destro, mi ingegnerò di dire qualche cosa di relativo, in modo però da non urtare.)

51. ASCF, busta 4527, rapporto segretario January 26, 1865. (Primo, perché siamo troppo impegnati col mondo intiero che l'aspetta a farla nel maggio, anniversario della nascita del Poeta, nè per urgenza abbiamo il diritto di differirla al settembre, tristo anniversario della sua morte, nè ad altra epoca, dopochè da sei secoli non ci siamo ricordati di celebrarlo. Secondo, che essendo la Festa limitata a tre giorni, questi purchè entrino nel maggio possono senza disturbare precedere o seguire l'istallazione della Capitale, o la festa del Tiro Nazionale, conforme queste vengano determinate. Terza, che moralmente parlando, la città natale di Dante chiamata appunto nel solenne anniversario ad essere il nuovo centro di quell'Italia una a cui egli aspirava, avvi più potente ragione per aver care queste feste, e celebrarle in quel tempo. Quattro infine che i debiti mezzi di preparazione una volta ben ordinati e stabiliti, nessuna complicità nè disturbo può nascere perchè le feste si facciano con onore di questa Città, che se oggi è accusata di inerzia, poteva pure in altri tempi, mentre era desolata dalle lotte intestine più feroci, elevare quei monumenti che il mondo ammira.)
52. One of the most respected and central figures of the Florentine Consorti, Francesco Bartolomei, declared on February 21, 1865, that he had decided to leave the Commission, since he could not support the proposed program and did not wish to divide the Commission even further with his presence. Cambray Digny, the Gonfaloniere serving as the president of the commission, managed to dissuade him from his decision; ASCF, busta 4527, adunanza February 21, 1865.
53. ASCF, busta 4527, adunanze January 21, 23, 26 and February 8, 21, and 27, 1865. While normally an average of ten members were present during the general meetings, those of January and February drew an average of twenty-seven participants.
54. *Giornale del Centenario* no. 37 (February 10, 1865): 293. (Se il Municipio ritarda di soverchio questa approvazione vi è pericolo che in questo importante argomento Firenze resti al di sotto della sua fama, ed oggi tanto più che non tutti parlano favorevolmente di lei.... La festa del Centenario è cosa della massima importanza, non solo per il carattere fiorentino di riparazione che può avere, ma molto più per il carattere nazionale che doveva prendere, e che prende infatti ogni giorno di più.)
55. "After that, the cortège will move on along [...], and it will arrive in Piazza S. Croce, where the representatives of the Fratellanze Artigiane and of the Mutual Aid Societies will already be standing in their appointed places" ("Di poi muovendosi di nuovo il corteggio lungo [...] arriverà sulla Piazza di S. Croce, ove saranno già disposti in bell'ordine i rappresentanti delle Fratellanze Artigiane e delle società di mutuo soccorso d'Italia"); *Programma per la festa nazionale*, 15–16.

56. *Guida ufficiale*, 33.
57. *Programma per la festa nazionale*, 17.
58. *Guida ufficiale*, 42.
59. The Commission discussed the mode of the allocation of financial aid on February 27, 1865; ASCF, busta 4527, article 10. Two months later it decided that the manner of the allocation of aid should be brief: "[...] some musical bands will be sufficient to open and close this distribution" ("[...]alcune bande musicali siano sufficienti ad aprire e chiudere questa distribuzione"); ASCF, busta 4527, adunanza April 27, 1865.
60. For a discussion of this term see Porciani, *La festa della nazione*, 29.
61. *Ibid.*
62. *Guida ufficiale*, 5. The decoration of Santa Croce, costing an astonishing 67,000 lire, was the most expensive component of the program. An itemized list of the expenses is found in ASCF, busta 4532, "rendiconto".
63. *Ibid.*, 17.
64. *Ibid.*, 20. The cost of decoration of the rest of the city, excluding Piazza Santa Croce, amounted to 54,000 lire. The detailed breakdown of expenses is found in ASCF, busta 4532, "rendiconto."
65. *Ibid.*, 28. The phrase evokes Dante's words "onorate l'altissimo Poeta" in Canto IV, line 80 of *The Inferno*.
66. Henry Clark Barlow, *The Sixth Centenary Festivals of Dante Alighieri in Florence and at Ravenna by a Representative* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1866), 22.
67. *Ibid.*, 25.
68. *Ibid.*, 26.
69. *Ibid.*, 26. (my italics).
70. David Kertzer, *Ritual, Politics, and Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 23.
71. Barlow, *The Sixth Centenary Festivals*, 28–29. (my italics).
72. The reference is to Paul Connerton's discussion of "performative utterance" in his analysis of liturgical language: "a performative utterance does not provide a description of a certain action. The utterance of the performative itself constitutes an action of same kind, beyond the obviously necessary action of producing meaningful sounds... liturgical language makes special use of 'us' and 'those'; the plural form, in 'we' and 'us', indicates, that these are a number of speakers but that they are acting collectively, as if they are only one speaker, a kind of collective personality [...] through the utterance of the 'we' a basic disposition is given a definitive form, is constituted, among the members of liturgical community. The community is initiated when pronouns of solidarity are repeatedly pronounced"; Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, 57–59.
73. The nation-wide plebiscites in 1859 and 1860 were the first collective acts of the constitution of the Italian nation.
74. Barlow, *The Sixth Centenary Festivals*, 29.

75. Barlow remarks on the unfair withholding of credit and recognition from others, especially Garibaldi, during the ceremony: "where is he who more than any other carried out the purpose of the prophet-poet? Where is he whose god-like voice and whose mighty arm joined together this long severed land, and made it one? [...] Our heart yearn towards him, and many a gentle sigh at his self-denying absence"; Barlow, *The Sixth Centenary Festivals*, 37.
76. *Guida ufficiale*, 22.
77. *Giornale del Centenario* no. 47 (May 20, 1854): 391; and *Guida ufficiale*, 22.
78. *Guida ufficiale*, 23.
79. The following epigraph was depicted on the Baptistry: "Even though the sorrows of men and of times dashed your sweet, constant desire to receive the well-deserved laurels of this San Giovanni where you became both a Christian and Dante, now Florence, together with all Italy, crowns your venerable head with a much more precious wreath, the solemn proof that the wrath of a people has ceased, a people who had turned this land into a vale of tears and sorrow, while at the same time it had given to others the joy and consolation of a civilization renowned in history" ("Se tristezza d'uomini e di tempi frustrò il tuo dolce costante desiderio di ricevere il meritato alloro di questo San Giovanni dove insieme fosti cristiano e Dante, Firenze con tutta Italia cinge oggi tua fronte venerata di corona ben più preziosa, testimonianza solenne delle cessate ire d'un popolo che avea reso terra del dolore e del pianto questa che alle altre prodigò le gioie e i conforti d'una civiltà celebre nella storia"); and on the Duomo: "In the year 1294, the Republic of Florence, inspired by Greece and by Rome, decreed: three centuries of splendid tyranny are not enough to provide a crown for this church, this artistic marvel sacred to God and to our homeland. Fraternally united under one ideal in the name of the Divine Dante, we swear to accomplish the redemption of Italy through freedom and faith" ("La repubblica fiorentina, emula di Grecia e di Roma, decretava nell' anno 1294 maraviglia dell'arte, sacro a Dio ed alla patria questo tempio, cui tre secoli di splendida tirannia non bastano poi a decorare la fronte. Fratelli uniti in un solo volere nel nome del divino Alighieri con l'opera della libertà e della fede giuriamo compiere la redenzione d'Italia"); *Guida ufficiale*, 25–26.
80. Quoted by Kertzer, *Ritual, Politics and Power*, 40.
81. Barlow, *The Sixth Centenary Festivals*, 35. (my italics).
82. *Ibid.*, 36.
83. Pius IX had just published (1864) his "syllabus of errors," denouncing and excommunicating all those who pledged allegiance to the Piedmontese king and his regime; Spencer Di Scala, *Italy: From Revolution to Republic* (New York: Westview Press, 1995), 125.

84. Barlow, *The Sixth Centenary Festivals*, 38.
85. *Ibid.*, 39.
86. *Ibid.*, 37.
87. *Ibid.*, 38.
88. Giovanni Spadolini, *Firenze capitale* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1971), 251.
89. Clifford Geertz, "Centers, kings and charisma: reflections on the symbolics of power," in Joseph Ben-David Clarke and Nichols Terry eds., *Culture and its creators: essays in honor of Edward Shils*. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press: 1977), 160.
90. Barlow, *The Sixth Centenary Festivals*, 60.
91. Di Scala, *Italy From Revolution to Republic*, 121.
92. Barlow, *The Sixth Centenary Festivals*, 61.
93. The advantage of this ambiguity was noted by the organizers of the festival: Italian cities could celebrate this event "without awakening the fears or jealousies of their government[... ]for it would be chiefly as the great Christian Poet and philosopher that Dante would receive this sixth centenary ovation"; Barlow, *The Sixth Centenary Festivals*, 2.
94. Kertzer, *Ritual, Politics and Power*, 85.
95. Barlow, *The Sixth Centenary Festivals*, 65.
96. Lucy Riall, "Liberal Policy and the Control of Public Order in Western Sicily," *Historical Journal* 35, no. 2 (1992): 346.
97. Kertzer, *Ritual, Politics, and Power*, 85.
98. Cited in Jacques Le Goff, *History and Memory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 33.
99. *La Civiltà Cattolica* (March 16, 1865): 633–634.
100. Le Goff, *History and Memory*, 34.
101. *Ibid.*, 35.
102. "Villari's position was between two worlds and two experiences, and so it was natural that, once De Sanctis was called to become the leader of public education, Villari should take on a role as almost a plenipotentiary between the two "departments of education:" the Florentine one of Ridolfi and Capponi, and the Turinese one of De Sanctis, whom the Tuscans suspected to be too inclined toward the education of the working class and indifferent to the higher education which was instead their concern"; Fabio Bertini, "Villari e l'ambiente culturale fiorentino negli anni sessanta," *RST* 46, no. 1 (1998): 116.

## 4 Inclusion and Exclusion: The Logic of Participation

1. Friedrich Schiller's argument cited in David Lloyd and Paul Thomas, *Culture And The State* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 48.



2. ASCF, busta 4522.
3. For an illuminating discussion of the distinction between “theatre” and “fête” see Lloyd and Thomas, *Culture and the State*, 39. The authors observe that “the contrast (of fête) with the theatre is completed and expressed through a number of more or less explicit oppositions: between the open and the closed, the light and the dark; between freedom and constraint, movement and stasis, unity and dispersion, authenticity and dissimulation—between in short, transparency and opacity. The substance of the fête, then, is openness and clarity.... There can thus be nothing traditional, or at least not commemorative about it”; Lloyd and Thomas, *Culture And The State*, 39.
4. *Ibid.*, 46–47.
5. ASCF, busta 4527–26, rapporto segretario February 12, 1864. (Compresa dell’importanza e della solennità che dovrà avere quella Festa, perchè di Dante, e quindi festa italiana, anzi europea, [la commissione] fu unanime nel riconoscere la necessità che tutte le forze vive del paese venissero a aiutarla nel difficile compito. E non solamente fu a ciò sospinta dal carattere nazionale della solennità, alla quale tutta la città di Firenze come Patria del Poeta, deve prestare attivo concorso; ma anche perchè, trattandosi della gloria di Dante e di una secolare e prima onoranza fatta al suo nome, ogni cittadino di qualunque classe e condizione egli sia a diritto, e dovere al contempo e di essere consultato e di porgere l’opera sua.... Tutti insomma vi fossero rappresentati.)
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.* This last remark reveals that the commission was wary of the fact that it was comprised mostly of old men. In fact, three members—Ridolfi, Fraticelli, and Torrigiani—died of old age either before the event of the Centenary or shortly thereafter.
8. Silvana Patriarca has analyzed the composition of participants/representatives who attended the 1867 Sixth Statistical Conference in Florence. She discusses an Italian “civil society” divided into three sections: north, center, and south. Through a statistical argument she argues that the organizations of civil society of north and center were much more developed, publicly visible, and active than those of the south; Patriarca, *Numbers and Nationhood*, 213–214.
9. ASCF, busta 4537, public notice of the Prefect of Girgenti, March 31, 1865. The notice calls on all corporations in Girgenti, one of the remotest provinces in south west of Sicily, to respond to the Florentine invitation and to send representatives to Florence on the occasion of the Centenary. (Fiorentino, non dirò: andate a visitare la Città che vide nascere Dante nel 1265, lo esiliò poco dopo.... Italiano, dirò invece: andate, o mandate Vostri Rappresentanti a rendere più solenne la festa che ricorda il centenario della Gnostic di Colui..., il quale in un sol corpo riunisse le divise membra d’Italia... Italiano, dirò: andate, e prestando onoranza alla memoria dell’Altissimo Poeta, vittima delle intestine discordie,

confermate con nuovo morale plebiscito il patto dell'Italia una sotto lo scettro Costituzionale del Re Vittorio Emanuele II).

10. "For this reason we would like to invite all of the Italian municipalities and the government itself to take active part in it, thus strengthening more and more the union of all towns under that sacred name" ("E quindi per ciò che noi vorremmo invitati i municipi tutti d'Italia ed il governo stesso a concorrervi efficacemente, e cementare così sempre più la fusione delle provincie in quel nome santissimo"); *Giornale del Centenario* no. 3 (February 29, 1864): 18.
11. Ibid.
12. ASCF, busta 4527, adunanza January 23, 1865, article 7.
13. ASCF, busta 4530, file 7, "Circolare di Municipio di Firenze," March 12, 1865. (In quella fausta occasione nella quale l'Italia potrà finalmente onorare il vaticinatore della sua unità, converrebbe che i municipi, le università, i licei e le principali accademie, tutto quello insomma che nell'ordine politico, come delle lettere, delle scienze e delle arti rappresenta la nazione, fosse anche rappresentato nella Festa.)
14. ASCF, busta 4527, adunanza March 20, 1865. Vannucci and Pagganucci were among those arguing for direct invitations to be extended to major municipalities.
15. ASCF, busta 4530, file 7.
16. Most of these letters were numbered by the Centenary Commission and are kept in their original format in three separate buste (4531, 4534, 4538) in ASCF.
17. ASCF, busta 4537, file 26.
18. (Carissimo Amico, Questo Gonfaloniere pregato da me a voler nominare... [qualcuno che] rappresentasse alle feste del centenario il municipio e le scuole ginnasiali e tecniche di Montevarchi, mi ha risposto che non si credeva autorizzato a farlo, perché, non avendo ricevuto veruna comunicazione o invito ufficiale, credeva che i rappresentanti dei municipi di provincia, e degli istituti secondari d'istruzione non vi fossero ammessi, o vi fossero poco volentieri avolti. Col programma alla mano non m'è bastato l'animo persuaderlo che non si faceva eccezione per alcun municipio, né stabilimento d'istruzione. Sicché per avere anch'io un posticino alla festa, non mi resta altro che pregarvi a volermi dirigere un verso per dirmi che col programma inserito nella *Gazzetta di Firenze* e in altri giornali s'è inteso invitare senza eccezione i rappresentanti di tutti i municipi italiani, e di tutti gli stabilimenti d'istruzione per cui saranno graditi anche quelli mandati da noi. Così gli mostrerò le tue parole autorevoli)
19. *Rivista dei Comuni Italiani* (April–May 1865): 331.
20. Ibid. (anche nei rimoti recessi dei gioghi alpestri da loro abitati, non è meno vivo il culto al divino poeta, che nei grandi e più civili centri; in tal modo tutti i comuni italiani potevano essere rappresentati al Centenario, senza che questo onore fosse riserbato all'*aristocrazia dei comuni*.)

21. The case of the city of Avezzano in the province of Abruzzo indicates the uncertain self-consciousness of smaller cities. They felt the need to justify their eligibility for representation at the Dante Centenary. Enrico Mattei, a representative from Avezzano wrote a letter dated May 10, 1865, addressed to the Centenary Commission: "[...] Among the many famous places over there which will gather to solemnize the memory of one of Florence's greatest poets, this gentle city will not refuse to reserve a place for the town of Marsi, whose ancient history and recent commercial development are certainly worthy of notice" ("[...] La gentile Firenze non avrà discara che fra i nomi di tanti illustri luoghi i quali costì figureranno per solennizzare il ricordo d'uno dei più grandi suoi figli, trovi un posticino anche il nome di questa terra di Marsi, che per antiche memorie e per novello sviluppo di industriale attività e di commercio non è assolutamente l'ultima d'Italia"); ASCF, buste 4531–34–38, letter number 1080.
22. *Giornale del Centenario*, no. 50 (December 31, 1865): 409.
23. My research of Ricasoli's correspondence held at the Archivio dello Stato failed to clarify why he decided not to attend the Festa, nor be involved in its preparations in any way.
24. Ricasoli's correspondence at this time reveals that he was preoccupied with arranging a secret trip to Rome. He left Florence on the eve of the Centenary.
25. ASF, Carte Ricasoli 1–141, cassetta 64, Vincenzo Ricasoli to Bettino Ricasoli, May 14, 1865. (La festa è stata sublime, ordinata e faceva quasi piangere di consolazione vedere tanti municipi riuniti qui, come un nuovo plebiscito—le conseguenze saranno immense. Ormai credo che non partirò che mercoledì, e sono contento d'essere rimasto.... Il municipio di Torino non era rappresentato. La provincia sì, e l'università.)
26. The mayor of Genoa made such inquiries in an April 10, 1865, letter; the Prefect of the province of Piacenza did so in a April 21, 1865, letter; both documents are in ASCF, busta 4531.
27. Turin did, in fact, receive a direct invitation. On April 28, 1865, the mayor of Turin wrote a short response—lacking the customary words honoring Dante and the host city of Florence—stating that it had received the invitation, and that a deputation was going to attend the Festa; ASCF, busta 4538, letter number 97. The investigation of the details of why Turin changed its decision regarding participation requires research in the Communal archives of that city. My search in the Florentine archives and libraries has yielded no evidence of Turin's actual participation, and has established that Turin never donated its municipal flag to Florence.
28. The exact number of mutual aid societies appearing on the attendance list in the Centenary archives is 208; ASCF, busta 4522. For a list of the names of the representatives, see busta 4522, file *società operaie*. A few of the associations classified under mutual aid societies in the Centenary list, such as the Società Letterarie di Catanzaro and Società

- degli Asili Infantili di Carità, are not strictly mutual aid societies, and do not appear in the 1875 official government statistics for mutual aid, *Statistica delle Società di Mutuo Soccorso 1875* (Rome: Ministero d'Agricoltura, Industria e Commercio, 1875). A copy of the *Statistica* can be consulted at the Sala Manoscritti at the BNCF.
29. *Gioranle del Centenario*, no. 50 (December 31, 1865): 409.
  30. Calabria 1, Campania 12, Apulia 3, Sicily 8, Sardegna 2.
  31. Emilia Romagna 13, Lombardy 16, Piedmont 7, Liguria 3.
  32. The birth of worker societies on a national level, in fact, coincides with the unification of Italy and the granting of freedom of association. Piedmont's worker societies had enjoyed freedom of association since Carlo Alberto's statute in 1848.
  33. An example of such work is Robert Lumley ed., *The New History of the South* (Devon, United Kingdom: Exeter Press, 1997).
  34. An example of this kind of historiography is Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work. Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).
  35. Putnam's study cited in Lumley, *The New History of the South*, 9–10.
  36. For pioneering examples of such studies see: Moe, "The Emergence of the Southern Question in Villari, Franchetti and Sonnino"; Marta Petrusewicz, *Come il Meridione divenne una Questione. Rappresentazioni del Sud prima e dopo il Quarantotto*, Soveria Manelli: Rubettino, 1998; Patriarca, *Numbers and Nationhood*. Patriarca brings attention to the ways in which statistical reports of post-unification decade do not simply reflect the 'state of things' but established and constructed "the kind of 'comparativist' approach that has characterized the debate on the 'southern question' since its origins"; Patriarca, *Numbers and Nationhood*, 239–240. The collection of essays in Schneider ed. *Orientalism in One Country* deal with the ideological underpinnings of this historiographic constructions.
  37. ASCE, busta 194, "Agli operai di Firenze. Indirizzo presentato da G. Regaldi sulla Piazza di Santa Croce il 16 Maggio 1865."
  38. For a recent study of the history of the Italian worker societies see Tomassini, *Le società di mutuo soccorso*; also see the classic text by Richard Hofstetter, *The Italian Socialist Movement I: Origins* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), chapter 2. For local studies see Sandro Daini, "Il solidarismo guidato. Élite borghesi, ceti popolari e politica nella società operaia di Cascina (1864–1914), *RST* 41–42, (1995–96): 3–22; Ivo Biagianti, "Filantropismo e sociabilità alle origini dell'associazionismo nell'Aretino," *RST* 39–40, (1993–94): 33–45; and Carlo Mangio, "Per uno studio dell'associazionismo democratico livornese e toscano (1861–1915)," *RST* 39–40, (1993–94): 22–33.
  39. Until 1848, the number of the mutual aid associations were limited primarily because of legal limitations on freedom of association. From 1800 to 1850, only 82 societies existed in Italy. From 1848 until 1859, the

kingdom of Sardinia (Piedmont, Liguria, Sardinia) witnessed a growth of such societies, thanks to the efforts of the “bourgeois-Liberal class”; Tomassini, *Le società di mutuo soccorso*, 16.

40. Ibid.

41. ASCF, busta 4527, adunanza January 23, 1865.

42. The group included primarily Poggi, Uccelli, Frullani, Fraticelli, and Casamorata.

43. ASCF, busta 4526, adunanza January 23, 1865. The report of the Commission reads: “[...] modifying (the article) however in the sense that the municipality would become the first to establish endowments and aids, and that the fraternities and worker societies will not take the initiative to do so, a point which Signor Casamorata particularly insists upon. Doubt is cast upon the cooperation of such worker societies, but Signor Masini highlights the principles which animate them, thus removing all shadows from their participation in this work. Signor Casamorata replies that he fundamentally agrees with Signor Masini, and therefore the president, observing that all of them agree with the article which claims that it is more a question of form than of substance, asks Signor Poggi not to ask for its abolition, and Poggi accepts, declaring that he shares Signor Casamorata’s opinion.” (“Articolo [...] modificandolo però nel senso che il Municipio sia il primo a stabilire delle doti e dei soccorsi e le fratellanze e società operaie non ne abbiano l’iniziativa, nel che insiste specialmente il signor Casamorata. Si muove il dubbio sul concorso delle dette società operaie, ma il signor Masini fa osservare quali siano i principi dai quali son animate e toglie ogni dubbio sulla loro partecipazione a quest’opera. Il signor Casamorata replica che si trova d’accordo nella sostanza col signor Masini, ed il presidente, rilevando che tutti ammettono l’articolo per il quale è più questione di forma che di sostanza, prega il signor Poggi a desistere dal chiederne la soppressione, al che questi consente dichiarando di collegarsi alla opinione del signor Casamorata”); ASCF, busta 4526, adunanza January 23, 1865.

44. Ibid.

45. ASCF, busta 4035, letter addressed to Guerrazzi, April 7, 1865. (Cittadino, L’Operaio non è mai ingrato. Esso rammenta sempre con orgoglio i suoi figli, i quali con il loro ingegno seppero nobilitare questa classe di cittadini tanto utile, ma così disprezzata da quelli cui un lampo di fortuna, o un avito retaggio ha fatto dimenticare la loro origine. A noi, cittadino, competeva di *pieno diritto* rappresentare la città nostra al Centenario di Dante. Quelli che regolano le... cose municipali pensarono altrimenti, e alla dottrina e allo ingegno posposero tre priori estratti a sorte come se ciò bastasse a rappresentare quella poca sapienza che abbiamo in Livorno.)

46. ASCF, busta 4035, undated letter signed by ten Milanese mutual aid societies; ASCF, busta 4035. (“Dante!... Questo nome che risuona gigante

non solo in Italia ma nel mondo tutto; questo genio straordinario destò un tale entusiasmo di venerazione che in questa solenne ricordanza nessuna classe di cittadini rimase estranea e silenziosa pel grande avvenimento. La nuova Italia nell'onorare il suo Poeta Nazionale adempie un dovere verso colui che fu primo a vagheggiare quell'Unità che noi, dopo sei secoli possiamo quasi dire d'aver raggiunta. Mentre questo cittadino fermo nei principii di libertà ed emancipazione, conduceva la sua vita emigrando di terra; non [risegnò] mai i suoi propositi pieno di fede di arrivare alla disgiunta meta; e il divino suo poema è prova di quanto fosse capace quell'anima forte di civile coraggio e di esemplari virtù. Governi e municipii, tutti gareggiarono in questa commemorazione al fine di darle un'impronta piuttosto unica che rara. La classe operaia non poteva star muta a tale nazionale, anzi mondiale dimostrazione, e riunitasi in assemblea per deliberare quale potea essere il modo di dare anch'essa una testimonianza di quell'affetto rispettoso verso colui che gettò la vita con inestinguibile scintilla di libertà che traversò tanti secoli e non fu mai spenta per la magia dei suoi scritti, votava questo atto per attestare la sua esultanza.)

47. There is evidence of a pervasive perception on the part of the elite that support of the worker's societies could be obtained through the enlisting of their leadership: "The Worker Association and the Fraternity Association, which are the most numerous. Dolfi, Piccini and, to some extent, Martinati, are very influential in them. These two associations are at the service of almost all political parties from the ultra-Republican to the Constitutional and Municipal—In order to have their cooperation, one only needs to win Dolfi's heart, and that's not very difficult." Spadolini, *Firenze capitale*, 208.
48. "Having approved that the distribution be carried out by means of a mandate which will be given to each society's leader, the president now proposes to eliminate an introductory speech from the program of the festa, he agrees that some musical bands will be sufficient to open and close the distribution ceremony" ("La distribuzione da farsi per mezzo di un mandato da consegnarsi ai Capi delle rispettive società essendo approvata, il presidente propone di eliminare dal programma di questa festa un discorso che la presieda e si ritiene l'accordo con esso che alcune bande musicali siano sufficienti ad aprire e chiudere questa distribuzione"); ASCF, busta 4527, adunanza April 22, 1864.
49. By "expedient" I mean appropriate or tactical. I have not found any direct source material referring to the objections any party might have had to this option, except the following letter dated April 1864 to Corsini: "Is it true that the municipality or the Centenary Commission has decided to assign the funds to the mutual aid societies' leaders rather than to the individual workers? Please send me an immediate answer [...]" (È vero che il municipio o la commissione del centenario hanno stabilito di dar

i sussidi diversamente ai capi della società di mutuo soccorso anziché ai singoli operai? Rispondimi subito [...]) Signed Succioni (secretary of the Società Mutuo Soccorso tra gli Operai di Firenze); ASCF, busta 4537, file 26.

50. "Out of the sum which the municipality of Florence has made available for the Festa, the Centenary Commission has established to distribute a grant to Florence's mutual aid societies. I communicate this deliberation to you with the kind request that by May 5, you let me know the number of members of this honorable society, as well as the number of those whom the society itself deems worthy of this grant (both because of merit and of need). I also wish to inform you that, in accordance to Art. 10 of the program of the festa, the mutual aid societies, possibly with all of their members, are to be present at the distribution of the funds in Piazza S. Croce on May 16; and the sum which will respectively be assigned to them shall be handed to their special commissions before Dante's monument. The individual societies shall subsequently distribute the sum to their members according to their own regulations. The above-mentioned distribution ceremony will be very brief, but there will be some music to give more solemnity to it." ("La Commissione per il Centenario di Dante avendo stabilito di erogare sulla somma assegnatale dal Municipio fiorentino per la celebrazione delle feste un sussidio alle società di mutuo Soccorso esistenti in Firenze, nell'atto di partecipare alla S.V. Ill.ma per mio mezzo questa sua deliberazione e perchè la medesima consegua il debito effetto, la prega disporre perchè possibilmente a tutto il 5 del prossimo Maggio sia recapitato al sottoscritto il numero dei facenti parte di codesta onorevole società e di quelli che la Società stessa stima meritevoli come più bisognosi, di essere chiamati a parte di questa beneficenza. Al tempo stesso mi fo un dovere di prevenire la S.V. che per l'esecuzione della suddetta disposizione è stato stabilito che le società di Mutuo Soccorso come sopra dovranno intervenire colle loro insegne, conforme l'Art. 10 del Programma delle Festa, sulla Piazza di S. Croce nel giorno 16 Maggio possibilmente in numero completo, e che la somma che sarà loro rispettivamente assegnata si consegnerà ad un loro comitato speciale ai piedi del monumento a Dante, incaricandosi le singole Società di fare in appresso la distribuzione del Sussidio nei modi e forme che i rispettivi loro regolamenti prescrivono. Alla suddetta distribuzione brevissima in se medesima, saranno aggiunte delle musiche per darle solennità maggiore"); ASCF, busta 4533, letter of Municipio di Firenze, April 30, 1865.
51. ASCF, busta 4035, "Fratellanza Artigiana D'Italia, Comitato Centrale Provincia di Firenze," undated. (Infatti ove Ella consideri che la nostra associazione si compone di circa 3300 individui aventi tutti eguali doveri e diritti, come possa venire ammesso alcuno di questi al sussidio e la maggior parte essere esclusa da cotale beneficio? L'ammissione degli uni e l'esclusione degli altri non potrebbe creare un tale malcontento

- [...]? Come poi possa ottenersi che i soci riconosciuti più poveri e più meritevoli dal [sic] sussidio si sottopongano alla umiliazione di ricevere pubblicamente alla presenza non solo dei propri fratelli ma di popolo innumerevole la concessagli elargizione? Di più, quale impressione potrà risvegliarsi nel pubblico concorrente a tale festività la vista d'operai[...], che disgrazie straordinarie ma non conosciute gettarono nella miseria la più giustificata, presentarsi a ricevere un sussidio o a meglio dire un'*elemosina*? Ecco in succinto le più gravi ma non tutte le considerazioni che determinarono questo comitato alla presa deliberazione che son certo Ella troverà ragionevole e della quale vorrà tenere informata la prelodata commissione per il centenario di Dante[...].
52. ASCF, busta 4533, "Società di Mutuo Soccorso tra gli Operai di Firenze," April 25, 1865.
  53. Ibid.
  54. ASCF, busta 4533, "Società di Mutuo Soccorso tra gli Operai di Firenze," May 1, 1865. ([La Società] crede infatti che il decoro dell'Istituto e dei singoli socii venga menomato sia per l'assegnazione dei sussidi stessi che fosse fatta da autorità diverse da quelle che lo governano, sia per il modo e per la pubblicità della distribuzione, che non si accordano troppo co'principi fondamentali e collo scopo dell'Istituto medesimo.)
  55. Ibid., file SMS, letter April 25, 1865. (Il comitato dirigente ha quindi proposto alla commissione che quel sussidio che essa avrebbe voluto dare individualmente a soci che fossero indicati come meritevoli sia data invece in complesso lasciandone al comitato l'erogazione in quel modo che [apparirà] più conveniente nell'interesse dei soci.)
  56. Ibid., letter May 4, 1865. (... ma, dovendosi i sussidi distribuirsi individualmente e in modo e luogo pubblico, la società nostra si trova in una condizione troppo delicata, nè saprebbe quale designare tra i soci a questa beneficenza.)
  57. The letters of registration were usually brief, notifying the Centenary Commission of the number and names of the representatives. See for example: ASCF, busta 4537, Società degli operai di Arezzo, 6 April 1865. In a separate correspondence, the society writes to inform the Florentine municipality that it intended to leave its banner with the municipality; ASCF, busta 4035, letter May 14, 1865. The Società Operaia di S. Giovanni Val d'Arno sent three letters, April 10, 20, and 28, 1865, notifying that it had seen the program, and wanted to send representatives; ASCF, busta 4538. Other societies included, the Società Operaia di Savignano di Romagna, April 13, 1865, and the Società Operaia Napoletana, April 14, 1865; ASCF, busta 4538.
  58. The Società di Mutuo Soccorso per gli Operai, Agricoltori ed Altri Cittadini di Fogliano wrote a letter to the Centenary Commission stating that the *consiglio direttivo* of the society had determined to send two representatives to the Dante Centenary: "the other worker societies of



the nation have decided to take part in this solemn celebration... which honors the promoter of our independence, so our society has felt the duty to be present, all the more [...].” (“Se le altre società Operaie della penisola non hanno voluto mancare di prender parte alla solennità... in cui si onora l’iniziatore della patria indipendenza, questa nostra ne ha sentito maggiormente l’obbligo [...].”); ASCF, busta 4533, letter dated May 11, 1865.

59. Unfortunately for the historian, Guido Corsini ceased his transcriptions of the meetings of the Commission sometime in March, thus we do not have access to the Commission’s discussion of this problem. However, we do have the drafts of the agenda for the very frequent meetings in April and May. The draft of the agenda for April 22, 1865, reads: “The Artisans’ Brotherhood has expressed some concern about the distribution of the grants in Piazza S. Croce. If possible, please substitute the grants with the 2000 medals which will be available.” (“Difficoltà esposte dalla Fratellanza Artigiana per la distribuzione dei sussidi in Piazza S. Croce. Se potesse sostituire con quelle delle 2000 medaglie che si avranno disponibili”); ASCF, busta 4537, “adunanza generale,” April 22, 1865. A few weeks later on May 9, the Commission considered the proposal of the worker societies. No details are available in this draft.
60. ASCF, busta 4531, document dated May 11, 1865, list of Fratellanza Artigiana.
61. ASCF, busta 4035. (In ogni rimanente riferendomi a quanto evvi l’onore rappresentare nella precedente mia dell’ Aprile decorso, posso accordare la S.V. Illma che la somma che verrà assegnata dalla benemerita commissione pel centenario di Dante a questa Fratellanza sarà erogata a forma dello Statuto che la governa, cioè a dire in opere di beneficenza come per esempio doti alle sorelle, agli alunni delle nostre scuole etc etc.)
62. ASCF, busta 4533, letter of the Società Cappellai di Firenze, May 5, 1865. The letter reads: “Our Artisan Brotherhood of Florence received an announcement which informed us that the municipality of Florence decided to assign our society a sum of 15,000 lire to be distributed among the Workers’ and Mutual Aid Societies of this city, with the request that the money be used to help the poorest individuals belonging to the societies themselves. We wish to inform you that there is also another society in Florence, which has been active for a very long time, under the name of “Hatters’ Society.” Besides being a mutual aid society, it also has, in its statute, a rule which grants hospitality to any hatter who comes to the city of Florence, provided that he has the necessary papers qualifying him as a hatter. This rule does not only apply to Italian hatters, but also to British, French, German and Spanish hatters, as well as those coming from any other part of the world where hats are made. Any hatter is immediately welcomed, offered a meal, and brought to the factories where he can start working, and if no work is needed, he receives from our funds 3 francs and continues his journey. This society

has existed since hats were invented and, even though it was persecuted and wound up by despotism, it always rose from its ashes, stronger than before, and more animated by its ideals of humanity and of progress. Its statute is imbued with morality, and is supported by brotherly charity. It has a seat which guides it, a flag which distinguishes it, and everything that is necessary to be constituted as a *corpo morale*. For these reasons, we think that our society deserves the attention of the municipality, so that it can be considered among those deserving the grant. In this way our society will be able to help its neediest members, as well as its oldest members, who will soon be eligible for a pension from its small funds, which at present only amount to 700 lire. Finally, we would like to point out the fact that, among the voluntary offers which both private individuals and corporations made to this Commune in 1859 for the War of Independence, you will find one made by Ulisse Pierotti, who was then the President of our Society, which proves the fact that our association already existed [...].”

Societies such as the Società Tipografica Galileiana, and the Società Mutuo Soccorso tra i Sarti di Firenze e Suburbio, the Direzione della R. Manifattura tabacchi in Firenze introduces, the Società Mutuo Soccorso tra gli Orefici di Firenze, wrote the Commission requesting their inclusion among those receiving the grants. The above letters are held in ASCF, busta 4533, file SMS.

63. ASCF, busta 4522, “rendiconto”.
64. *La Festa di Dante* no. 56 (May 21, 1865): 222.
65. Biblioteca Marucelliana, Sala Manoscritti, CG CCLXIX, letter of Dolfi to Garzoni, May 18, 1865. After introducing *La Fratellanza Artigiana di Modigliana*, Dolfi reports to Garzoni that the society was present at the ceremony. The society “by mistake made them come with the *Fratellanza Artigiana di Firenze*, and leave together with it” (“erroneamente li fece venire alla *Fratellanza Artigiana di Firenze*, e partire con essa”).
66. ASCF, busta 4533, Società degli Operai di Mutuo Soccorso, April 24, 1865. “In its special meeting of April 19, 1865, the administrative direction has decided that our Workers’ Society will be present at the Dante Centenary.... And so as to make your task easier, I would like to ask the president of the Florentine Workers’ Society for his assistance” (“la direzione amministrativa, nella sua seduta straordinaria del 19 corrente, ha determinato che codesta Società Operaia intervenga alla Festa del Centenario di Dante.... Onde poi riesca a Voi più facile l’adempimento dell’incarico che vi si affida, sento mio debito di officiare il presidente della Società degli operai di Firenze pregandolo della sua valida assistenza”).
67. Ibid., Società di Mutuo Soccorso degli Operai di Cetona, May 9, 1865.
68. I have created a database for the 1200 letters of registration written to the Centenary Committee, and held in buste 4531, 4534, and 4538. Fifty-one of these are primary, secondary, or technical schools, both public

- and private, excluding universities. The information about six of these are either incomplete or illegible, thus I could not track their region. My analysis is thereby based on this sample of 44 schools nationwide.
69. ASCF, busta 4533, file 1, letter of Convitto Nazionale di Cagliari, 26 March 1865. The school wrote to the Centenary Commission notifying that it was planning to take the students on an “educational trip” to the Centenary Festa, “such a highly educational solemnity.”
  70. These initiatives were discussed in chapter 2.
  71. Porciani, *La festa della nazione*, 97.
  72. *Giornale del Centenario* no. 20 (August 20, 1864): 158. (Poi l'accorrere di molti alla gara tornerebbe sempre a grande onore di loro e a grande ossequio al Poeta. Così lo Stato lasciando ad altrui quello che meglio gli si affà, entrerebbe anch'esso e degnamente alla festa, traendone cagione d'avanzare in meglio gli studi, ai quali tutti guardano o dovrebbero guardare.)
  73. ASCF, busta 4533, “Municipio di Firenze,” May 1, 1865.
  74. *Ibid.* (Accordare in questa solenne circostanza un sussidio a quelle famiglie *bisognose* che hanno i loro figli nelle pubbliche scuole della Città, acciò che per questo modo sia data testimonianza di lode a quei genitori cui sta a cuore l'educazione della loro prole, e il lodevolissimo esempio trovi imitatori....)
  75. *Giornale del Centenario* no. 45 (April 30, 1865): 368.
  76. ASCF, busta 4532, “rendiconto.”
  77. ASCF, busta 4533.
  78. ASCF, busta 4533.
  79. Porciani, *La festa della nazione*, 92.
  80. *Ibid.*
  81. ASCF, busta 4537, file 2, May 8, 1865, draft of minutes. The section of the draft which addresses the allocation of tickets giving access to the Piazza reads: “1000 red tickets for Via dei Benci; 3000 green tickets for Borgo S. Croce.” See also ASCF, busta 4537, file 17, *appunti*, letter of the Gonfaloniere, May 12, 1865: white and yellow tickets are for “the King’s Councilors, Procurator and his substitutes at this supreme court, who are invited to be present at 8:30 a.m. at Piazza S. Croce, wearing a black suit and white tie. The green tickets will grant access to the second tribune.”
  82. *Ibid.*, itemized list for the *biglietti*.
  83. *Ibid.*
  84. See Porciani, *La festa della nazione*, 88–95. The pervasiveness and persistence of a gender-biased view of the nineteenth-century national feste, even in cases when evidence literally paints a different picture, is rather astonishing. A portion of the painting of the Dante centenary mentioned above forms the cover of an 1988 edition of Ugo Pseci’s diaries originally published in 1909, *Firenze Capitale (1865–1870)* (Florence:

- Ristampa Anastatica, 1988). That portion has cut out nearly two-thirds of the original whole, including all the women. It positions Cambray Digny, Dante's statue and the king in the center of the painting, surrounded by men in military attire or black tie.
85. "Dear friend and colleague, I apologize immensely for bothering you. I need two or three tickets for women in the reserved tribune of Piazza Santa Croce. You would do me a great favor if you could send me those tickets..." ("Caro amico e collega, scusate e poi scusate che vi tormento anch'io. Son bisognoso di due o tre biglietti per signore nella tribuna riservata in Piazza Santa Croce. Mi accorderebbe favore grandissimo a mandarmi cotesti biglietti..."); ASCF, busta 4537, file 14, insert 12.
  86. *Ibid.*, file 14, insert 13.
  87. See letters of Ermenia Fua Fusinato (1834–1876) at Biblioteca Marucelliana, Sala Manoscritti, Carte Fua Fusinato, Erminia (1834–1876). Marucelliana holds approximately 27 of the letters. None refers directly to the Festa, and a few are written to Righini, Le Monnier, and to Barellani.
  88. ASCF, busta 4537, file 2, "curiosita." (Caro Guido, Rossi non reciterà i versi della Fusinato, ed ella mi scrive che non vuole che sieno in verun modo recitati. Una donna che non si è voluta alla festa, non può esser voluta all'Accademia. Se la Fusinato fosse stata contessa avrebbe avuto l'invito—La Fusinato che non è contessa non può permettere che si leggano quei versi. [...] La Fusinato non doveva neppure chiedere i biglietti e li ha dovuti chiedere. Voi altri dovevate sapere che la Fusinato era Veneta, Veneta esule, poetessa e invitata a scrivere dal Municipio. I versi dunque della Fusinato non sieno letti: me ne duole ma ella ha ragione.)
  89. Contessa Maria Montemerli wrote the Commission from Paris on May 11, 1865. Thanking the Commission for inviting her to the event, she excused herself from attendance and sent a poem instead; ASCF, busta 4537, file 2, "curiosità."
  90. Andrea Maffei recited the poem by Francesca Lutti, and Maggi recited some verses written by Laura Beatrice Mancini; *Avvenire* 1, no. 32 (May 17, 1865).
  91. *Ibid.*
  92. *The Atheneum* no. 1961 (May 27, 1865): 719.
  93. For a description of salon life in Florence during the nineteenth century see: Maria Teresa Mori, *Salotti. La sociabilità delle élite nell'Italia dell'Ottocento* (Rome: Carocci editore, 2000), 82–90. Mori underscores the centrality and vitality of the Pulzki salon during the years Florence served as the capital; see page 85–86. For a composit picture of salon life in Italy from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries, see: Maria Luisa Betri and Elena Brambilla eds., *Salotti e ruolo femminile in Italia tra fine Seicento e primo Novecento* (Venice: Marsilio Editori, 2004). Two essays on specific Florentine salons (Pozzolini and Peruzzi) in the

- years preceeding and following the Unification discuss the milieu and the function of these salons, though they do not specifically address the one at the house of the Pulszkis.
94. "We have decided to leave a memory of these secular feste in these pages" ("Abbiamo voluto ora che di queste feste secolari rimanesse memoria in queste pagine"); *La Gioventù* 7, (May 1865): 521.
  95. *Ibid.*, 526.
  96. Zeffiro Ciuffoletti, "Esilio, massoneria e circolazione delle idee," in *RST* 39–40, (1993–1994): 411.
  97. Spadolini, *Firenze Capitale*, 206–226. The societies mentioned are the following: Associazione dei Paolotti, Massoneria di Rito Scozzese, Associazione della Tutela e dello Sviluppo delle Istituzioni Costituzionali, Associazioni Operaie e della Fratellanza, Associazione Democratica, La Falange Sacra, Associazione Repubblicana, La Carboneria, and Associazione dei Liberi Pensatori.
  98. Report of Ministro dell'Interno, June 4–6, 1865, reads: "Masonry means Left Wing of the Parliament. The lodges won't be present, but its individual members will be active;...the Workers' Associations exclusively influenced by these people will participate in the action, and hope to form a compact, powerful group, whereas the Moderate Party will be divided and influenced by various interests," quoted in Spadolini, *Firenze capitale*, 221.
  99. For a detailed history of the convergence of political parties and Masonic lodges read: Fulvio Conti, *Laicismo e democrazia. La massoneria in Toscana dopo l'Unità, 1860–1900* (Firenze: Centro Editoriale Toscano, 1990), 40–43; also see Sergio Goretti, "Logge e massoni nella Firenze postunitaria," *RST* 39–40, (1993–1994): 65–83; Luigi Polo Friz, *La massoneria italiana nel decennio postunitario* (Milan: Franco Angelli, 1998); Aldo Mora, *Storia della massoneria italiana dall'unità alla repubblica* (Milan: Bompiani, 1976).
  100. *Storia della Loggia Massonica Fiorentina Concordia (1861–1911)* (Florence: Arnaldo Forni editore, 1911), 87–88. The work is an early edited compilation of minutes of the masonic lodge. (Ricorrevano in Firenze le feste del sesto centenario di Dante. La Loggia deliberava di mandarvi un suo rappresentante, non solo, ma volgeva la mente, secondo l'indole intima sua, a opere praticamente benefiche. E a ciò appunto si riferisce una sua circolare che qui riporto: "nella occasione che l'Italia festeggiava solennemente il sesto centenario di Dante, una Società di egregi cittadini, fra i quali vi sono alcuni nostri fratelli, ebbe il nobile e gentile pensiero di pubblicare a profitto della Pia Casa di Lavoro di qui un'opera intitolata *Album del Centenario di Dante*. La Rispettabile Loggia Concordia non poteva rimanere indifferente dinanzi a questo generoso proponimento che mira a compiere un atto eminentemente umanitario, andando in soccorso

ad uno stabilimento basato sul principio fondamentale della civiltà moderna, la santità e la dignità del lavoro. Epperò volendo concorrere con tutte quelle forze che le sono concesse alla buona riuscita di siffatto nobile proposito, ha deliberato di rivolgersi alle Rispettabili a tenere esposte le copie del manifesto di sottoscrizione per *Album del Centenario di Dante*, e pregare tutti i carissimi Fratelli Venerabili a tenere esposte le copie del manifesto nella sala dei passi perduti, per farle coprire di firme.”)

101. Conti, *Laicismo*, 41–42.
102. ASCF, busta 4534, letter number 763.
103. Spadolini, *Firenze capitale*, 108–110.
104. ASCF, buste 4531–34–38, letter number 390.
105. ASCF, buste 4531–34–38, letter number 1000. (Mentre ringraziano per tanto favore, pongono in Voi un’illimitata fiducia per tutto quanto starete per dire in quell’illustre Congresso, ove si parlerà del Grande Uomo, che dall’esame della Divina Commedia risultò irrefragabilmente come l’Alighieri fosse iniziato a nostri misteri, e quindi a tutti il LL.: MM: incomba l’obbligo di non lasciarsi sfuggire il destro di onorarne la memoria in qualsiasi modo, e vi danno colla presente Credenziale il loro più ampio voto e l’assicurazione che faranno tutto per approvare quanto direte a prò del Rito che siete per rappresentare.)
106. ASCF, buste 4531–34–38, letter number 938.
107. The third of its kind in Italy after Turin and Milan, the association was the Italian branch of the European Free Thinkers movement founded in 1848 in Paris, during the turbulent months of the second republic. The Société Démocratique des Libres Penseurs, a decidedly anti-clerical and rationalist association espousing “war on prejudice” and Catholic institutions, was also decidedly in favour of social revolution.
108. For Mazzini’s views on the Libero Pensiero movement, see Roland Sarti, *Mazzini: A Life for the Religion of Politics* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1997), 203.
109. Aldo Mola ed., *Stato, Chiesa e società in Italia, Francia, Belgio e Spagna* (Foggia: Bastogi, 1993), 236.
110. Spadolini, *Firenze Capitale*, 209. The report of the Questore, August 5, 1865, reads: “The Association is more philosophical than political. But since, by being anti-Catholic, it would go against any ideal of agreement with Rome, therefore it would, even unwillingly, enter the political field. Marinati, Piccini, Dolfi etc. are its promoters” (“L’Associazione sarebbe un’Associazione più filosofica che politica. Ma siccome per essere anticattolica combatterebbe ogni idea di accomodamento con Roma, così anche senza volerlo entrerebbe nel campo politico. –Ne sarebbero promotori Marinati, Piccini, Dolfi ecc.”)
111. ASCF, buste 4538–34–31, letter number 882.
112. ASCF, busta 4537, file “indirizzi letterari.”

113. ASCF, buste 4538–34–31, letter number 94.
114. Ibid., letter number 118.
115. Ibid., letter number 170.
116. Ibid., letter number 173.
117. Ibid., letter number 222.
118. Ibid., letter number 338.
119. Ibid., letter number 615.
120. Ibid., letter number 818.
121. ASCF, busta 4035, file 2, “carte diverse.”
122. The report of the Questore of Florence identified this society as a real threat to the hegemony of the Consorti: “Associazione dei Paolotti. This is certainly the most numerous and threatening association. It is the most numerous because it is made up not only of those who are formal members of the society of S. Vincenzo di Paola, but also of a large number of people who are scattered throughout all social classes and various administrations, and who serve the association, which is but an organ of a modernized Jesuit Society. And it is the most threatening because it also knows how to make use of individuals who have a reputation as liberals, and who are generally considered decent people. In all of Tuscany, and especially, this society is said to be very powerful everywhere in Florence” (“L’Associazione dei Paolotti. È certamente questa la più numerosa e temibile.—La più numerosa perchè non si compone soltanto di coloro che sono iscritti formalmente alla Società, detta di S. Vincenzo di Paola, ma eziandio di altro gran numero di persone che sparse in tutte le classi della società e nelle varie amministrazioni servono l’Associazione la quale altro non è che l’organismo della Società dei Gesuiti corretto alla portata dei tempi. La più temibile perchè sa servirsi anche d’individui che hanno odore di liberali, e che generalmente riscuotono fama di uomini onesti. In tutta la Toscana, ed in ispecie in Firenze vuolsi sia molto potente”); quoted in Spadolini, *Firenze capitale*, 206.
123. The suggestion was first made by Atto Vannucci in a meeting of the Commission; ASCF, busta 4527, adunanza February 27, 1865.
124. The representatives of the other big cities of Italy were not very satisfied with the reception they received in Florence. They thought they had been neglected. If three non-Florentines, Aleardo Aleardi, Terenzio Mamiani, and Gaspero Barberà, had not thought to promote a dinner that took place in Palazzo Serristori, the cities would not have had the opportunity to celebrate together....” Ugo Pesci, *Firenze capitale*, 75.
125. Namely Sanesi and Panciatichi; ASCF, busta 4527, adunanza March 20, 1865.
126. ASCF, busta 4537, file 11, letter of Casamorata to Guido Corsini, May 5, 1865. Corsini’s remarks on the border of the letter read “troppo complicato.”

127. Barlow, *The Centenary Festivals*, 60. (A nome e per commissione di parecchi Italiani, grati e riverenti agli stranieri illustri che accorsero a celebrare il Centenario di Dante, il Comitato sottoscritto invita la Signoria Vostra al Banchetto che avrà luogo mercoledì, 17 corrente alle 6 1/2 pomeridiane, nel Palazzo Serristori sui Renai. La Signoria Vostra ci compiacerà, entrando nella sala di esibire la presente lettera d'invito.)
128. *Ibid.*, 61.
129. ASCF, busta 4537, file 2, *nota dei invitati*.
130. ASCF, busta 194, brown booklet, "filza Medaglie Centenario Dante".
131. For Ricasoli's prominent role in the unification of Tuscany to Piedmont during 1859–1860, as well as in the period Florence served as the capital, see Giovanni Spadolini, "Ricasoli protagonista di Firenze Capitale," *Nuova Antologia* 115, (1980): 370–379; and W.K. Hancock, *Ricasoli and the Risorgimento in Tuscany* (London: Faber and Gwyer, 1926).
132. Barlow, *Sixth Centenary Festivals*, 37.
133. ASF, Carte Ricasoli 141, cassetta 64, 44, and 46, letters of Bettino to Vincenzo Ricasoli, May 13 and 15, 1865.
134. He made several trips to Turin to participate in the urgent discussions in the parliament regarding the laws of confiscation of ecclesiastic properties; ASF, Carte Ricasoli 141, Cassetta 64, letters 18 and 19. On May 12, 1864, two days before the Festa, Ricasoli wrote a letter to Giovanni Campani discussing the new "fornici," and the new technology of hydraulic power. On May 13, he was quite upset about the fact that the person who was to aid him with arrangements to Rome, might not deliver because he was going to be in Florence for the Centenary; ASF, Carte Ricasoli 141, cassetta 64.
135. Letter of Bettino Ricasoli to his brother Vincenzo, September 14, 1864: "I consider it a big disgrace for Florence to have been chosen as the provisional capital. I also think that the confusion in the administrations will increase at first" ("Io reputo una grande disgrazia per Firenze di essere scelta per Capitale provvisoria. Penso poi che la confusione nelle amministrazioni nel primo tempo s'accrescerà.") And in another letter: "Let Providence find good reasons so that the Pope's death will make Florence's designation superfluous, or let it at least make Florence's disgrace of being a provisional capital as brief as possible." ("La Provvidenza trovi buone ragioni che la morte del Papa renda superflua la designazione di Firenze, o, almeno, faccia sì che a questa mia città nativa tocchi per brevissimo tempo la disgrazia di essere una Capitale provvisoria"); in *Bettino Ricasoli a cento anni dalla morte*. Catalogo della mostra a cura di Luigi Mascilli Migliorini (Firenze, Palazzo Strozzi, September 26–November 1, 1980), 45–46.
136. Comparing unfavorably the literati of 1917 engaged in preparations of the 1921 Dante Centenary with those of the literati of 1865 Centenary,



Mangianti states: “Il nome di Dante spanventava! Ecco, in sostanza, la ragione per cui il *referendum* dantesco non ebbe fortuna presso *quegli uomini*”; Giorgio Mangianti, *Varietà: Alcuni curiosi documenti intorno al Centenario Dantesco del 1865*, Cornell University Dante Catalogue (1917), 95.

137. Ibid., 93.
138. Ibid., 94. (E mi è duopo anche confessare una mia istintiva e continua ripugnanza a scrivere versi per musica; giacchè avendo amato con lungo amore la poesia; sapendo come le esigenze musicali riducano spesso la Musa una servetta in cattivo arnese, mi sono sempre trattenuto dal partecipare a questa, direi quasi, crudele profanazione....)
139. Ibid.
140. Ibid., 95.
141. Democrats took the same stance toward the celebration of the Festa dello Statuto; Porciani, *La festa della nazione*, 22.
142. Andrea Cammelli, “Universities and Professions,” in *Society and the Professions in Italy, 1860–1914* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 39–40.
143. The Left’s association of Dante with Italian nationality is in fact much older than the years preceding the Centenary. In 1826, a young Giuseppe Mazzini had been one of the first figures to recognize Dante as the authentic father of the Italian nation. That year, Mazzini, still an unknown name, sent an essay “Dell’amore patrio di Dante,” to the *Antologia* of Gian Pietro Viessesux, who refused at that moment to publish the essay; Giovanni Spadolini, “Dante e Mazzini,” *RST* 39–40, no. 1 (1993–1994): 3–21.

## 5 The New Civic Vanguards: The Press and Public Opinion

1. *La Civiltà Cattolica* (May 1865): 633.
2. The Centenary Commission discussed the location of the press in the cortège in its meeting of April 29, 1865. Since the secretary stopped transcribing the *adunanze*, we do not have access to the narrative of the discussions over this important subject, but only to the draft of the agenda for the meeting. The draft of the agenda for April 29, 1865, reads: “stampa italiana, prima o dopo il corteggio,” next to which is written, “prima”; ASCF, busta 4537, adunanza April 29, 1865.
3. For the history of journalism in postunification Italy see Valerio Castronovo, *La stampa italiana nell’età liberale* (Rome: Editori Laterza, 1979); Giuseppe Farinelli, *Storia del giornalismo italiano dalle origini ai giorni nostri* (Turin: UTET Libreria, 1997); Franco della Peruta and Alessandro Gallante Garrone, *LastampaitalianadelRisorgimento* (Bari:

- Laterza, 1979); Luigi Lodi, *Giornalisti* (Bari: Laterza, 1930); Congresso dell'Istituto Nazionale per la Storia del Giornalismo, *Il giornalismo italiano dal 1861–1870* (Turin: Edizioni Parallelo, 1966).
4. Castronovo, *La stampa italiana*, 3.
  5. *Ibid.*, 3–7. Ricasoli himself had argued that although the granting of freedom of the press was a necessary component of civic progress, the political condition of Italy rendered such freedom imprudent and impractical: “I consider periodicals to be one of the most effective instruments of contemporary civilization, and I believe that the governments which make good use of them instead of oppressing them are acting wisely and cautiously. But given the present needs of our times, I also think that, in a country like ours which is so swept by the expectation of great events, the press might easily become a cause of civil strife.... The time will come for free discussion. Now is the time to act manly, with that harmony which alone can subdue our enemies and show us as worthy of a better destiny” (“Io stimo la stampa periodica uno degli strumenti più efficaci della presente civiltà, ed i governi che non la opprimono, ma se ne vantaggiano, stimo che facciano opera savia e prudente. Ma nelle attuali necessità dei tempi stimo del pari che in un paese come è il nostro, commosso dalla aspettazione di grandi eventi, la stampa possa facilmente divenire un fomite di civili discordie.... Verrà il tempo delle libere discussioni. Ora è il tempo dell’operare virile, con quella concordia che sola può sgomentare i nostri nemici e mostrarci degni di migliori destini”); letter of Bettino Ricasoli to the prefects of the Ministro dell’Interno, May 18, 1859, cited in *Ricasoli a cento anni dalla morte*, 24.
  6. Lodi, *Giornalisti*, 10. (Il problema della tiratura era quasi ignoto. Del resto quasi tutti i giornali si rassegnavano pressoché senza rimpianto a una modestissima clientela di lettori.[...]. Quegli organi erano esclusivamente dedicati a un fine di propaganda politica.)
  7. *Ibid.*
  8. Farinelli, *Storia del giornalismo italiano*, 189.
  9. *Ibid.*, 163.
  10. In a letter to Celestino Bianchi, Ricasoli wrote: “I tremble when I think of whose hands the Florentine newspapers are in, and I tremble when I think of the misfortunes that are about to fall on my native city. I don’t know if it is worse to have newspapers written by mean souls or by inept ones” (“Io tremo quando penso in quali mani sieno i giornali di Firenze e tremo nel pensare alle sventure che sono presso a cadere su quella mia città nativa. Io non so se peggiore sventura sia l’avere giornali scritti da anime cattive o da anime inette”); letter of Bettino Ricasoli to Celestino Bianchi, September 15, 1864, cited in *Bettino Ricasoli a cento anni dalla morte*, 27.
  11. ASF, Carte Ricasoli 141, cassetta 64, letter number 42, Carlo Fenzi to Bettino Ricasoli, May 15, 1865. (Visto che le condizioni della stampa

periodica in Italia sono veramente poco soddisfacenti, richiedono che vi si ponga rimedio; poiché andando avanti di questo passo, oltre a fare una meschina figura di fronte al rimanente dell'Europa civile, si prepara invece di educarle, un lento avvelenamento morale alle nostre popolazioni.)

12. *La Festa di Dante* no. 55 (May 14, 1865): 216.
13. For a discussion of journalism in Florence during the period it served as the capital, see Clementa Rotondi, "La stampa periodica negli anni di Firenze Capitale," *RST* 12, no. 2 (1966): 153–185; Silvia Mugnaini, "Spiriti, profetti, fattucchiere: l'abate Pierini annuncia la sua 'vera buona novella'. La reazione cattolica in Toscana (1859–1866)," *RST* 31, no. 3 (1985): 241–265; Sergio Camerini, "Firenze dall'annessione alla Capitale" (reference lost, but I have a copy); Clementa Rotondi, "La stampa reazionaria a Firenze dalla proclamazione dell'Unità al trasferimento della Capitale," in *Giornalismo italiano dal 1861–1870*, 141–145.
14. The Democrats had a similar stance toward celebrating the Festa dello Statuto. See Ilaria Porciani's *La festa della nazione*.
15. I have conducted an exhaustive research of the periodicals published in Florence during the period. My search began with a consultation of Righini's bibliography of Florentine periodicals. I have consulted those periodicals found in the BNCF, BARF, Marucelliana, Gabinetto Vieusseux, and the periodical archives in the Forte Belvedere. Several periodicals appearing in Righini's bibliography were not available in any of the above locations. These include: *Fede e ragione*, *Grande oriente massoneria*, and *Il diritto*.
16. Letter of Guido Corsini to Parazzi, quoted in Rajna, *I Centenari danteschi*, 25. (Il popolo poco o nulla ne sa, ed il giornalismo dovrebbe a parer mio occuparsi fin d'ora a spiegargli il dovere e l'importanza della festa, e fargliene provare il desiderio e lo zelo.)
17. In the minutes of the General Commission the wording of the proposal appears as follows: "Request to the Parliament that the day of Dante's birth be declared a national holiday" ("Domanda al Parlamento che il giorno della nascita di Dante sia richiamato giorno di festa Nazionale"); and, in the Secretary's Report, "That the renowned A. Manzoni be the spokesman, at Parliament, on behalf of the proposal that the day of Dante's birth be declared a national holiday, a proposal signed by all Italians, or in his own words, a new plebiscite" ("Che l'illustre A. Manzoni sia l'interprete presso il Parlamento italiano della proposta diretta a far decretare Solennità Nazionale il giorno Centenario della nascita di Dante firmata dagli Italiani, come egli dice, un nuovo plebiscito"); ASCF, buste 4527 & 4526, adunanza and rapporto segretario, February 1, 1864.
18. ASCF, busta 5427, adunanza February 1, 1864, (my italics). (Le quali proposte, dopo breve discussione, sono dichiarate inattendibili dalla

Commissione, che opina non doversene far oggetto di proposta al Municipio, stante esser quelle di *tal natura da doversi rilasciare[...]allo sviluppo della pubblica opinione.*)

19. ASCF, busta 4522, file “giornali,” January 28, 1864.
20. ASCF, busta 194, file 11. (La Commissione nominata dal Municipio fiorentino e il Municipio stesso disporranno tutto quanto parrà di meglio a maggior decoro di questa città; *ma l’opera loro sarà principalmente fiorentina.* Se non che Dante essendo, come diceva Balbo, *l’italiano più italiano* che sia stato mai, occorre anche far opera che sia italiana. Sembra perciò non doversi [perdere] tempo in mezzo a stabilire un centro di corrispondenza fra le singole città d’Italia, al quale faccian capo tutti i cittadini italiani, che dotati di buona volontà hanno diritto di esprimere il loro voto; e serva eziandio di continuo stimolo all’opera degna, chiarisca i dubbi, assesti le controversie, promuova ciò che è più giusto, più bello, più utile, e possa quindi venir consultato ed atteso come *l’organo della pubblica opinione.*)
21. Ibid. Article 2 of the manifesto reads: “It will not have any special contributors, though many distinguished men of letters promised their cooperation; the request to participate is instead extended to *everyone with no distinction*, so that the *Giornale* can be, as it should, the expression of everyone’s opinion” (“Non avrà collaboratori speciali, quantunque valorosi uomini di lettere abbiano promesso l’opera loro, ma si fa appello a *tutti indistintamente*; onde il Giornale possa essere, come è dovere, l’espressione del pensiero di tutti”).
22. Ibid. The Manifesto also appears in the first issue of certain collections of the *Giornale del Centenario*, such as the one held in the Cornell University Library. (Questa solennità nazionale viene ormai ad essere un sacro dovere per gl’Italiani tutti, i quali già associati col cuore a questa necessaria rivendicazione del passato, si sentono ora più che mai portati a solennizzarla nel più splendido modo. E già da varie delle più cospicue città della Penisola si sono fatte proposte e ci vengono annunziati progetti di festività, di pubblicazioni e di manifestazioni d’ogni maniera per onorare la memoria del sommo Educatore della patria comune[...] Centenario di Dante, nel quale l’Italia celebrerà non che la nascita del Poeta massimo, ma l’idea fecondatrice dell’italico risorgimento da lui presentita, proclamata, sostenuta, difesa.)
23. *La Festa di Dante* no. 1 (May 1, 1864): 1. (Questo giornaleto è per il popolo ed ha per iscopo di prepararlo alla gran festa in memoria di Dante; e lo cominciamo in questo mese perchè in esso nacque il Divino Poeta[...]. Perchè il popolo appunto sappia bene di che si tratta, cominciamo dal pubblicare la vita dell’Alighieri.)
24. Beginning with an address to Italian people in general and ending with a hail to Florentines, this passage highlights the key rhetorical and political strategy of the Florentine organizers mentioned in chapter 1: to

nationalize and popularize a local hero, thus claiming an exalted place for Florence in the new nation. (Sia solennemente celebrato in Firenze nel mese di maggio 1865 il sesto Centenario di Dante, che vuol dire il secentesimo anno dalla sua nascita. O popolani, Dante Alighieri amò la patria con un affetto immenso, e quell'affetto gli costò l'esilio, la confisca dei beni e la minaccia di morte[...]. Ma sapete voi da che vennero tutti i suoi mali? Dalle discordie cittadine che furono sempre la peste del mondo, che rovesciarono ogni libertà, e ingrassarono gli stranieri a spese e vergogna nostra[...]. Oggi che il popolo a prezzo di sacrifici e di sangue ha ripreso in gran parte la sua dignità, ed è in grado di farsi rispettare e temere, è nostro sacro debito di rivendicare il più grande degli uomini, il più Italiano degli Italiani. A tale oggetto si prepara la festa del suo sesto Centenario; ed ogni domenica pubblicheremo per voi, o popolani, questo giornale, nel quale scriveranno uomini *che vi sono amici davvero*. L'Alighieri fu il profeta della rigenerazione Italiana, e questo profeta è vostro concittadino, o Fiorentini!)

25. Ibid., no. 1 (May 1, 1864): 2. (Tu hai sentito mille volte nominare Dante Alighieri, ma tu forse non sai precisamente quando nacque, quanto visse e che fece di grande e di bello, per avere il nome di poeta divino. Io dunque voglio dirtelo perchè tu possa prepararti alla festa nazionale che si farà in onor suo, e che è detta *Centenario di Dante*.... Il solo suo nome basta fare grandissima una nazione, e nei giorni di schifosa schiavitù fu come ruggito di leone fierissimo contro la tirannia straniera.)
26. Ibid., no. 1 (May 1, 1864): 3. (E fu buon pensiero il vostro, signor Direttore, di dare in luce il *Giornale del Centenario*; e quando, a far sempre meglio, prometteste aggiungerci un foglio settimanale a pro della moltitudine. Torna proprio bene che anche i più godano di questo gratissimo convito nazionale. In tal modo il popolo non adorerà Dante con cieca idolatria, ma saprà il perchè di tanto amore, e di tanta riconoscenza verso l'altissimo poeta. Permettetemi dunque che anch'io, nato di popolo, concorra con qualche mio lavoro all'istruzione del popolo.)
27. Ciapo and Vieri are old Florentine names.
28. *La Festa di Dante* no. 2 (May 8, 1864): 8. (*Ciapo*. Ma tu che te ne intendi, perchè sei stato a scuola, levami un po' di curiosità. Quando nominan Dante, e c'incastrian sempre qualche altro nome, per esempio quello di Guido Cavalcanti. E chi fu questo Guido?  
Vieri. E fu uno degli amici più cari dell'Alighieri[...].)
29. *La Gioventù. Giornale di letteratura, d'istruzione e di scienze* 8 (1865): 519–543.
30. Ibid., 519.
31. *La Educatrice Italiana* 2, (May 15 and 30, 1865): 257–261.
32. *Letture di Famiglia* (May 1865): 660–661.
33. *Il Pensiero Italiano* no. 30 (May 15, 1865), articles “Dante” and “Centenario di Dante: primo giorno”.

34. *Il Giornale Illustrato* 2, no. 19 (May 13–19, 1865). The journal had lost a bid to the publisher Cellini in procuring the right to publish the official program of the festa.
35. Discussed in chapter 3.
36. The *Programma delle feste dantesche* was sold in various bookstores for 60 centesimi. An advertisement for the program appeared in *L'Avvenire*, May 14, 1865.
37. The Granduchist/Legitimist groups generally stood for Tuscan autonomy. Wary of unification and Piedmontization, the group looked towards pre-unification times with nostalgia. From 1864 to 1865, the number of the Granduchist journals exceeded that of the liberal ones.
38. *La Bandiera del Popolo* (February 28, 1865), “Il Centenario di Dante e il Municipio fiorentino,” quoted in Rotondi, “La stampa periodica,” 175.
39. *La Bandiera del Popolo* (May 14, 1865): 1. (Se intesero di festeggiare in Dante il primato della poesia italiana, scelsero male il momento davvero, in questi tempi di prosa e di ladri. Se poi si son dati ad intendere di simboleggiare col Centenario Dantesco l'Unità italiana colla caduta del Potere Temporale del Papa, mostrarono addirittura di non avere, dopo i fatti recenti un micolin di giudizio dentro il cervello. E nel vero, messo da parte il fatto certissimo ed evidente per storia che Dante non fu mai un unitario né Frate Massone come ora lo vogliono, la Festa è un controsenso dei buoni dopo la CONVENZIONE di settembre[...]. Se col Centenario i Barbassori che ci conducono per i prunai ed i greti si proposero di festeggiare i tempi danteschi, ossia la Repubblica di Firenze, si domanda, come possano ciò fare senza strangolo forte e senza ridicologaggio. Mettono in Piazza la Marinella, ma dov'è il Popolo Repubblicano? Rizzano le bandiere delle arti, ma queste dove sono? Controsensi di storia, controsensi di politica, controsensi di opportunità—Ecco le feste a Dante.)
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid., (May 18, 1865): 2. (original italics). (Al ritrovo popolare sotto gli Uffizi era prescritto che nessuno poteva presentarsi senza essere *vestito decentemente*. Più tardi, con apposito Proclama, il Signor Digny di motoproprio ci faceva sapere che per essere *decenti*, era condizione indispensabile lo *staio* ovvero *tuba*.... Come si fa a promettere un ritrovo popolare e poi mettere restrizioni e cacciare il popolo?)
42. *La Civiltà Cattolica was published in Rome and circulated across Italy*.
43. *La Civiltà Cattolica* (May 16, 1865): 633–634. (Agl'italianissimi basta di dare ad intendere, che l'Alighieri, fiorentino e repubblicano d'anima, poeta e letterato cattolico, ha preconizzato l'unità d'Italia e la caduta del dominio temporale del Papa. La festa del Centenario di Dante è una festa *ibrida e pagana*, e una contraddizione alle sue dottrine politiche e religiose, una negazione dei sentimenti del popolo.)

44. (Non parlo dei vestigi e dei ricordi repubblicani; non delle epigrafi quando bugiarde, quando antipapali, e barbare quasi tutte; non delle antenne infinite ornate di bandiere a grandi strisce di maccheroni; non dei gingilli e dei cerotti onde sono impiestrati i muri di Firenze. Questi sono accessori in una festa *Nazionale*, ristretta tutta al culto dell'uomo *civile* ed estranea al cittadino religioso. La Città è piena d'ornamenti, di tabernacoli, di festoni tricolori, d'archilei, di trabiccoli, di altarini, che la direste il paese della cuccagna; molto più che essa è sparsa di lunghissimi stili, meno "lo bello stile che *ci* ha fatto onore." La minor parte della festa n'è toccata al popolo, perchè il gonfaloniere gli ha chiuso tutte le strade che comunicano colla piazza di Santa Croce, e non gli ha permesso l'accedervi che sopra una porzione dei palchi che la coronano.)
45. For a history of the Catholic Church's repression of the European Carnival and popular culture, see Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (London: Temple Smith, 1978), 234–240.
46. Directed by Tito Albanesi, this biweekly (1864–1873) exemplifies the spirit of criticism of the inconveniences caused by the transfer of the capital to Florence. Distinguished for its clerical-reactionary character, the paper used ironic language to attack the internal and external policies of the Italian government. Its major position was that Tuscans were better off under the rule of the Austrian Grand Duke. It also defended the necessity of conserving the temporal power of the pope. After the September Convention it criticized the preparations which were underway in Florence for a dignified transfer of the Capital.
47. *La Vespa's* harsh criticism of the festa includes the following allusions: "The Divine Poet will bounce around at the Teatro Pagliano. Dancing some minuets with Beatrice, he will get drunk and eat like a pig at the Banchetto del Popolo outside the Uffizi, after cutting a great figure at Santa Croce as a huge puppet made by the sculptor Pazzi. Then, if a thunderstorm does not send us a blessing from the Seven Heavens, there will be little devils here, some turmoil there, musical bands, a lot of boasting around, trophies, meaningless inscriptions to great and little men. There will be a procession of arts and crafts, including the craft of the *thief* [the reference is to Carlo Fenzi, the Jewish banker and the director of *La Nazione*] who will lead and carry the flag. The bingo, the Ruffa delle Pillore d'Arno and the grants from the banks of the disabled for the girls' dowries. The academies of blunders, where stands out Professor Achille Gennarelli, who recreated the world in spite of the *Cronaca di Mosé*. *Luterino* Lambruschini will recite a grotesque rigmarole at the Chiassolo del Buco in which he will begin by declaring himself Catholic, and will end as a rotten Protestant with the usual *annihilation* of the Rock of Error, which for him is Pontifical Rome" ("Il Divino Poeta ballonzolerà al Teatro Pagliano de' bravi minuetti con la Beatrice, s'imbriacherà come un porco e mangerà a strappapelle,

- sotto gli Uffizi nel Banchetto del Popolo dopo averla fatta in S. Croce in figura di smisurato fantoccio scolpito dallo scultore Pazzi. Poi, dato che l'acqua non venga ad orci per calarci addosso la benedizione dei Sette Cieli, diavoletto di qua, trambustio di là, bande, sparate, trofei, icrizioni senza senso comune agli uomini grandi ed ai piccoli. La Processione dell'arte e dei mestieri non escluso quello del *ladro* che andrà in capo lista con la bandiera. La tombola, la ruffa delle pillore d'Arno e i sussidi delle banche dei monchi, per le Doti delle ragazze. Le accademie degli spropositi nelle quali si distingueva sopra gli altri il Professor Achille Gennarelli rifabbricatore del mondo sulla barba alla *Cronaca di Mosè*. *Luterino* Lambruschini recita una Tiritera grottesca nel Chiassolo del Buco dove comincia a professarsi cattolico, e termina protestante marcio con la solita *espugnazione* della Rocca dell'errore, che per lui è Roma pontificale"); *La Vespa* no. 100 (May 15, 1865).
48. Ibid. (Opuscoli qua e là, scritti nella lingua dell'anatre faranno conoscere per amore o per forza al popolo rintontito che Dante Alighieri fu il più gran vate del mondo, e l'Unità italiana nata e staccata. Di questa canzonatura rideranno i vivi ed i morti e quelli che son per nascere. Perché Dante, sottosopra fu tenerone dell'unità come i giudei del Battesimo[...]. Insomma Dante e l'unità furon S. Antonio ed il Diavolo.)
  49. Ibid. (Eppure gli asini festaioli, che di storia ne sanno dimolto, ossia nulla, ci strapazzano col Centenario di Dante facendone un Frate Massone[...]. Se almeno gli avessero fatto qualcosa di buono per il popolo, la festa poteva passare: ma loro già son tutti cavalieri del Dante e pensano per gli affari di casa sua [...]. E ora capisco perchè i furbacci che ci rigovernano gli hanno scelto per l'appunto il Centenario per festeggiare l'unità italiana. O con questa festa, o con quella che viene, a Roma ci siamo, si tratta di cent'anni, per un popolo l'indugio è corto e chi vivrà vedrà)
  50. *La Guardia Nazionale* (May 20, 1865), "Relazione delle feste che ebbero luogo in Firenze."
  51. *La Vera Buona Novella* no. 39 (May 17, 1865): 613.
  52. Ibid., 609–617.
  53. (è indescrivibile l'effetto prodotto nelle turbe da questo spettacolo inatteso. Chi ne fu impressionato in un modo e chi in un altro, secondo le svariate e contraddittorie condizioni degli animi. È da notarsi però che egli solo riscuoteva da non pochi astanti gli applausi i più frenetici.)
  54. Ibid., 610–611.
  55. Directed by Eugenio Alberi, *Firenze* was founded in 1863 specifically for "insinuating federalist maxims and principles" ("insinuare massime e principi federali.") Its real intentions were reactionary, but were masked under a "federalist" platform. The promoters and collaborators of the journal were known for their clerical sentiments. They could not keep up the front for long; little by little they began to follow the example of *Il*



- Contemporaneo*, attacking the government and favoring the Catholics, the laws of the church, and the pope; see *Il giornalismo italiano dal 1861–1870*, 142.
56. *Firenze* no. 113 (May 15, 1865): 1–3.
  57. *Ibid.*, no. 112 (May 13, 1865): 2–3.
  58. (Domani (14 maggio) si festeggia il sesto centenario di Dante. Temendo che Giove Pluvio non ne facesse qualcuna delle sue, abbiamo consultato il lunario, per vedere se annunciava qualche variazione atmosferica. Ma il Daccelli, grazie al cielo, non annunzia guai. Quello però che ci ha dato nell'occhio li è che appunto nel giorno 14 maggio ricorre la festa di S. Bonifazio, santo protettore del Manicomio di Firenze. Che la festa del centenario sia davvero la *festa dei pazzi*? Ce ne duole per il divino Poeta, costretto suo malgrado a rappresentar la parte che Victor Ugo assegna a *Quasimodo* nel suo romanzo *Notre Dame de Paris!* [...] Il fanatismo, quando eccede, degenera sempre nel ridicolo.)
  59. Still other periodicals, such as *Il Contemporaneo: rivista fiorentina di politica e varietà*, directed by Stefano San Pol, maintained absolute silence on the subject of the Centenary. *Il Contemporaneo's* silence is conspicuous since the journal attacked all things "Italian" or "revolutionary," and defended the papal states and ecclesiastical privileges. It specifically targeted the "men of '59," and with sharp language it attacked their organs, specifically "the Jews of the *Nazione*" ("gli ebrei della *Nazione*"). "Put us on trial, you Jews of the *Nazione* . . . , you unjust imbeciles, cowards, fools, beasts, parasites, infamous liars, deceivers of the people, you who despise our Catholic religion and slander our priesthood" ("fateci processare, o Giudei della *Nazione* . . . , iniqui, imbecilli, codardi, vigliacchi, buffoni, animali, proci, vilissimi mentitori, ingannatori del popolo, dispregiatori della cattolica religione nostra, calunniatori del nostro Sacerdozio") The journal's objectives were also to discredit the Piedmontese institutions and the politics of Victor Emmanuel II. Throughout the years of its existence (1860–1865), it was sequestered 34 times; see Rotondi, "La stampa reazionaria a Firenze."
  60. The antiunitary *Cronaca Settimanale* (1864–1865) continually attacked the politics of the Italian government and supported the temporal power of the pope. In the beginning of 1866 it fused with *Il Contemporaneo*; see Rotondi, "La stampa reazionaria," 130.
  61. *Cronaca Settimanale* (May 18, 1865).
  62. (Dante non è nel nostro calendario nè come cattolico, nè come politico, nè come italiano, e neppure come fiorentino. È per ciò che non ci siamo entusiasmati alle sue feste, e che ci siamo prefissi di dedicargli invece alcuni articoli, quando saran cessati i baccanali della rivoluzione in suo favore.)
  63. *Ibid.* (Victor Hugo, nella lettera che ha scritto al municipio di Firenze per le feste di Dante, ha detto che l' Italia è uscita appena oggi, dopo sei

- lunghe secoli, dalla sua *tomba*. Io lo credo. Perché l' illustre poeta francese l' ha giudicata dallo scheletro.)
64. *Gazzetta del Popolo* (May 11, 1865).
  65. Generally on the same ideological line as that of *La Nazione*, yet less dogmatic, *Gazzetta del Popolo* propagated the complete unification of Italy under Victor Emmanuel.
  66. (Firenze ha tutt'altre cose a cui pensare, Firenze è in preda all'anarchia, e al disordine. Torinesi e Fiorentini hanno finalmente sfogato quella sete che avevano di accapigliarsi, e si sono accapigliati.[...] Il governo ha mandato a dire che si sospendano le Feste del Centenario, con grave dolore del sig. Guido Corsini; ha sospeso anche l'invio della roba da Torino, perchè chi sa se il trasferimento della Capitale avrà più luogo: ha messo Firenze in stato d'assedio, e quasi quasi sta per scrivere agli impresari di Russia, perchè scritturino a conto nostro il basso profondo Muravieffo.)
  67. *Gazzetta del Popolo* (May 14, 1865). (Ma tutte queste esterne manifestazioni, questi apparecchi, e quei festeggiamenti che si preparano per i due giorni che seguono, sono vinti dall'idea generosa e grande che riunisce fra le mura di una stessa città tante migliaia di cittadini d'Italia[...]. Una sola cosa rimane integra in tutta la sua maestà, e questa è l'omaggio riverente che non pure l'Italia ma L'Europa tutta tributano oggi a quell'Altissimo, che insegnò come l'uomo s'eterna, e come s'eternino le nazioni sulle quali brilla la luce immortale della civiltà [...]. Festeggiando Dante, noi festeggiamo il trionfo della libertà.)
  68. *L'Avvenire* 1, no. 29 (May 14, 1865): 1. (La nostra gioia in mezzo a tanti fratelli di tutte le province, lo diciamo apertamente, non è stata completa; un doloroso pensiero venne a funestarla, il pensiero cioè che mentre compievansi un atto di giustizia e di riconoscenza, uno forse facevasene di ingiustizia e di ingratitudine. Un cittadino mancava in mezzo a tutti quei cittadini, quei che iniziò a Marsala la gloriosa bandiera col motto: ITALIA UNA E VITTORIO EMANUELE.... Non senza ragione, ci siamo serviti del *forse*, perocchè quando vedemmo invitato alla festa di Dante il sommo Victor Hugo, ci baleno giocondo il pensiero che anco Giuseppe Garibaldi sarebbe stato invitato.)
  69. *Il Temporale* (March 28, 1865), "La casa di Dante, il Municipio e il Paolotti."
  70. *Ibid.* (May 17, 1865), "Cronaca fiorentina."
  71. *Lo Zenzero* advocated social revolution and covered news concerning the condition of the working class and the *popolani*. On occasions, it did not refrain from harsh criticism of the government. While it approved the September Convention, it viewed the accord as a necessary step towards the ultimate goal of the liberation of Rome and Venice.
  72. *Lo Zenzero: giornale politico popolare* (May 17, 1865).
  73. Porciani, *La festa della nazione*, 194.

74. *Eco della verità* nos. 55, 56, 57 (May 10, 13, 17, 1865): 217–228.
75. *Ibid.*, no. 56 (May 13, 1865).
76. *Ibid.*, no. 57 (May 17, 1865).
77. *Ibid.*
78. *L'Esaminatore's* position was the complete and perfect reconciliation of religion and scientific and civil liberalism. A month after the Centenary, the director of the journal, Giuseppe Pitrè, proposed to constitute a national association for the reform of the church.
79. *L'Esaminatore* (May 15, 1865): 105–114.
80. *Ibid.*, 106. (Or come mai un'opera medesima fatta segno e fonte di giudizi e di apprezzamenti così disparati? Libero di pietà, e pietra di scandalo ai cattolici ortodossi; magnificato dai pontefici, e proibito al giovane clero? ... Or vediamo adunque come fu cattolico Dante; vediamo, vo'dire, se uomo possa professarsi debitamente cattolico e dispiacere a coloro che si arrogano quasi il monopolio delle religiose consolazioni.)
81. *Ibid.*, 108–109.
82. *Ibid.*, 110. The author speaks in Dante's voice: "They say that now I am being highly honored by my Florence, and largely compensated for the bad treatment which she reserved for me during my life. But if Florence wants to please me, then let her, together with the other Italian cities, attend to the well-being of Italy, which I so tenderly and wrathfully loved, rather than worry about my memory, which has been revived for a long time now" ("grande, si dice, è l'onore che la mia Firenze or mi tributa, e compenso esuberante ai mali trattamenti de'quali fu prodiga a me vivente, ma più assai che al conforto della mia memoria, la quale ormai da gran tempo non giace più, ella insieme colle città sorelle italiane attenda se vuol piacermi, al bene di questa Italia che nella dolcezza e nell'ira io tanto amai").
83. *Chiacchiera* (13, May 1865).
84. *Ibid.* (La Scena rappresenta il magnifico Porticato degli Uffizii addobbato a festa con *ninnoli* e *nannoli* di tutti i colori \_ Il sacro è mischiato al profano, sendovi fontane, fiori secchi e freschi ed altri gingilli, uniti a molte filze verdi. ... Nulla insomma manca alla parte decorativa, tranne l'effigie simbolica del *Giudizio* e del *Senso Comune*.)
85. *Ibid.* (May 20, 1865). (*La Chiacchiera* è un giornale a cui piace ridere e scherzare, quindi rise e scherzò pure sopra ad alcune cose preparate per le Feste di Dante, ma rise e scherzò secondo il suo solito, cioè senza offendere alcuno, rispettando l'alta e solenne circostanza. ... I nostri lettori ci sapranno buon grado di questa determinazione, poichè è una novella prova degli onesti nostri principi, e del franco proponimento di non volere entrare mai con quella parte di giornalismo che lavora per i nostri nemici!)
86. *Chiacchiera* (June 20, 1865). (La Festa dello Statuto e quella del Tiro Nazionale, l'una sì vicina all'altra, sono riuscite assai bene. Paragonate l'allegria che si leggeva su tutti i volti in questi due giorni, con l'uggia

- itterica scolpita sui musì dei codini il dì del Corpus Domini alla Processione, e poi ditemi chi si deve esser divertito di più, se noi in mezzo alle bande musicali o loro in mezzo alle orde degli incappati berciatori, senza nemmeno uno straccio di piffero nè di tamburo[...]. La Festa di domenica (Tiro Nazionale) è una delle poche che conviene all'Italia[...]. Che bella gioventù, che aspetto marziale, e come tirano diritto! La gran bella istituzione!... tiro tiro, uccello uccello![...] Che i fatti ravvedano gli stolti e perversi codini, e domenica alla distribuzione dei premi gridino con *Chiacchiera*: Viva i bravi Tiratori; Viva Italia guerriera; Viva il Re soldato!!)
87. Ibid. (June 24, 1865). The section reads: “back then, San Giovanni was highly venerated because his effigy was engraved on the most valuable coin. Now that the mint no longer baptizes its creatures with the names of saints, even the Baptist has lost some of his popularity” (“San Giovanni, a quei tempi, si teneva in gran venerazione perchè la sua effigie stava scolpita sopra la moneta di maggior valore. Oggi che la zecca non battezza le sue creature coi nomi di santi, anco il Battista ha perduto un poco nella popolarità”).
88. Ibid. (Che mi faccio della libertà quando non son padrone di farmi ammazzare da un barbero? A che mi giova l'unità se per essa il giorno di San Giovanni è un giorno come gli altri, e non vedo più il servizio di chiesa con le Guardie del Corpo? Se il municipio non rimette le cose come stavano, divento codino anch'io. È vero che ora c'è la Festa dello Statuto, che, non fo per dire, ma è una bella festa; c'è stata la Festa di Dante, ora c'è quella del Tiro Nazionale, e nell'anno si festeggiano le gloriose battaglie combattute e vinte dalla nazione; tutte belle cose, non contravverto, ma i Chocchi, i Fuochi e i Barberi soprattutto non ci son più e io protesto ed altamente protesto, perchè anco le carogne debbono figurare, se non foss'altro perchè i paolotti sieno rappresentati nelle feste patrie.)
89. *Il Fiammifero* (April 18, 1865).
90. Ibid. (Plebe di novità sempre briaca/ Col cranio vuoto e l'alma impecorita/ D'antiche glorie a rattoppar la vita/ Laggiu s'indraca....E lauri e drappi e nomi d'alto pregio/ Costretti per la moda all'impostura/ Di quelle quattro scalciate mura/ pendono a fregio.... Ecco. Dal centro della turba astante / Che nulla intende e tutto udire anela/ S'innalza un grido, e giù cala la tela: è Dante! è Dante!)
91. An year before the event of the Centenary, England extended an unprecedentedly warm welcome to Garibaldi who was visiting with the intention of procuring support for his cause of Italian unity; Harry Rudman, *Italian Nationalism and the English Letters* (London: Columbia University Press, 1940), 318–330.
92. *The Cornhill Magazine* (September 1865): 244.
93. Ibid., 245.
94. *The Atheneum*, no. 1627 (January 1, 1859).

95. Ibid., no. 1961 (May 27, 1865).
96. Presumably, the disguised identity of the author afforded him complete liberty of expression.
97. Since coming across the pamphlet by chance in the Archivio del Risorgimento, I have been unable to identify its author. The pamphlet does not appear in the bibliography of publications for the Centenary, and I have found no references to the text. The pamphlet can be found in, BARF, s.t. Misc. 32.23. I have made a photocopy of the pamphlet, which is available for consultation.
98. *Inferno*, Canto I, lines 4–6.
99. *Il Sacrilegio*, 6. (la scena punto italiana, in nulla degna del primo *mes-sia* della democrazia italiana perchè Italia NON è —o, solo *dolore e bordello*—*diplomaticamente* arcana in penombra dovea velare la sincera e pura poesia del sole italiano nella città più italiana per testamento e storia ed istinto, repubblicani.)
100. Ibid.
101. The author characterizes the king as a traitor. In the same section he continues: “The same Victor Emmanuel who had betrayed Italians at the September Convention, allied himself with Napoleone III and the pope; the same king who sold Nice to French under a *Talmud*.”
102. (Il nuovo *issimo* della *galanteria* che lo segnò nel *vocabolario* degli epiteti, anima quella festa, gloriosissimo quale si è per eroismo di *postriboli*, cittadino sovrano nella legislazione de’*faggiani*[...]. Quel vessillo presiedeva *degnamente* alla pompa. In appendice, per dirci così, significava: Dante essere stato un Savoiaro—avere profetizzato i *baffi* proverbiali di Vittorio Emanuele *due*. [...] Giusto Giudizio! Avresti tu guardato in quel modo Alighieri dar *inchino* ad una *casa* che in letteratura entra co’tropi, l’antonomasia ed in politica è tipo, archetipo, e prototipo di Italia—poco monta se Italia *bordello o dolore*.)
103. *Il Sacrilegio*, 8.
104. (Il gran codazzo procede.—Quasi ultime passano le bandiere di Roma e Venezia....Avvinse o supplici a piedi di quel re che sottoscrisse la Convenzione 15 Settembre, lasciò il Sillabo in prepotenza; col ruffianesimo- Vegezzi firma un trattato di pace e fratellanza al Papa, umilmente; [...] Roma e Venezia in comunella con un Tanacca in carabina, il cui programma è obbligo di Venezia, abbandono di Roma, schiavitù sorda sotto la Francia in parricidio, obbrobrio secolare della penisola.... Popolo fratello! Credi bene ora al sacrilegio composto nel centenario di Alighieri—a quella profanazione sulla sua tomba immortale—a quella eresia sul domma più alto e misterioso che abbia per lui e da lui l’Italia: onore, emancipazione, umanità? Egli che piangeva di sdegno patrio per Roma, a Roma sospirava quella sublime poesia.)
105. Ibid., 10.
106. Ibid., 12–13. (Profani! A che venite a mercanteggiare nel nostro tempio immacolato? Qui è il santuario d’Italia, cercate altrove le Sinagoge

de' vostri giuchi, delle orgie fastosamente turpi; altrove portate il turibolo e l'incenso. Qui vi è Dio e non l'idolo, evvi un angelo di vita, non Baal o Jehova. Qui, alla casa del dio progresso non arrivano le contaminazioni bugiarde e sacrileghe dell'oro. Qui fu ispirazione continua la virtù repubblicana....Una corona, una tiara: l'incenso o l'aspersorio sono profani in questo tempio perchè fu nostro divorzio da tutti que'connubi adulteri che sposano la tirannide della Chiesa colla libidine de' Monarchi....Profani fuggite)

107. "You have a Mazzini, you have a Garibaldi—and you are slaves—and you enjoy your slavery, and so you heretically come to receive the auspices of the first Nazarene against your slavery? [...] but the Greyhound of the revolution will come!!" ("Avete un Mazzini, avete un Garibaldi—e siete schiavi- e godete nella schiavitù e così ereticamente venite a raccorre gli auspici del primo Nazareno contro la vostra schiavitù?[...] ma il Veltro rivoluzione verrà!!").
108. Ibid., 14. (Fuggi tu almeno da tanta profanazione.—Tu unico, puro e serbato al centenario dell'avvenire. E ben fuggisti quel giorno, bensì solo composto a religione onesta e libera santamente, dopo tre dì armonizzando l'inno della rivoluzione, salutando Mazzini e Garibaldi, votasti sul monumento di Alighieri un culto alla patria, al progresso, all'umanità.)
109. Discussed in chapter 1.
110. *La Civiltà Cattolica's* article on the Centenary explicitly stated its intention: to serve as a corrective to the pompous depiction of the event in the Florentine newspaper *La Nazione*. The critique is then expanded to include the press in general: "At the head of the procession were the *enlighteners* of public opinion, the journalists, whose chief is a Jew, and at the end were two of the squanderers of public funds, the municipality of Florence and that of Ravenna" ("Aprivano il corteggio gl'*illuminatori* della pubblica opinione, i giornalisti, dei quali è capo un ebreo; lo chiudevano due degli scialacquatori della pubblica pecunia, il municipio di Firenze e quel di Ravenna"); *La Civiltà Cattolica* (May 16, 1865): 633.

## Conclusion

1. Antony Taylor, "Shakespeare and Radicalism. The Uses and Abuses of Shakespeare in the Nineteenth Century Popular Politics," *The Historical Journal* 45, no. 2 (2002), 357–379.
2. Jacques Rancière, *The Names of History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 43.
3. See Rancière, "The Excess of Words" in Ibid., 24–42.
4. Ibid., 45–46



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Gabinetto Vieusseux, Florence  
Willard Fiske Collection, Olin Library, Cornell University, New York

## Notes on the Archives

This book has relied predominantly on a series of 13 *buste* in the communal archives of Florence. The *buste* in the Archivio Storico del Comune di Firenze, uninventoried, remain in the same condition that the Centenary commission left them in 1865. They are referred to in the catalogue of the archive under “Centenario di Dante,” and are assigned the following numbers: 4527, 4526, 4530, 194, 4533, 4537, 4035, 4536, 4538, 4534, 4531, 4522, and 4532.

Busta 4527 is a notebook containing the minutes of the meetings of the General Commission, written by the secretary of the commission, Guido Corsini. It covers the meetings from February 1864 to April 1864.

Busta 4526, is a “secretary’s report,” by Guido Corsini covering the same material as 4527, though is both better organized and more detailed.

Busta 194 contains material covering mostly the aftermath of the festa, specifically, the exchange of correspondence, “thank-you letters,” and the “medaglie.”

Busta 4522 contains several lists of the participants of the festa: associations, cities, provinces, including names of individuals representing these institutions.

Busta 4035 contains a variety of material: rough drafts of minutes of the meetings of the Commission, about 400 or so unnumbered letters from



- various corporations and municipalities addressing the Commission, various unpublished manuscripts, and "curiosities."
- Busta 453, contains 12 blue folders belonging to the Florentine municipality, and thus concerns the activities of this body in relation to the Centenary.
- Busta 4533 contains a large number of random documents.
- Busta 4532 contains material covering finances of the Centenary. A brown booklet "Rendiconto" contains an itemized list of work and the cost of preparations. Another booklet, "Registro Mandati" contains the list of people, their donation, how much they are owed, etc.
- Yet another contains the description and evaluation of the work towards the decoration of Piazza Santa Croce.
- Busta 4531–34–38 contain roughly 1200 numbered letters, sent from all over Italy to the commission in April 1864, as a way of registering for the Festa.
- Busta 4537 is massive and contains hundreds of documents, including the many versions and drafts of the program, regulations for the ceremonies (commissione cerimoniale), literary commission, many handwritten drafts of tickets and more than 50 written requests for tickets, drafts of the epigraphs for the festa, in short they mostly refer to the details and practical decision-making in organizing the festa.
- Busta 4536 is marked as "giornali" and contains copies of *La Festa di Dante* and *Il Giornale Centenario*.
- At the Biblioteca Centrale of Florence I have consulted the following archives: Carte Ubaldino Peruzzi, Carte Emilia Peruzzi, Carte Giuliani, Carte Niccolò Tommaseo, Carte Fraticelli, Carte Paganucci, Carte Cambray Digny, Carte Vannucci, Carte Servadio, Carte Garzoni, Carte Brunone Bianchi, Carte Ridolfi, Carte Casanuova, Carte Gino Capponi, Carte Lambruschini, Carte Fenzi.

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## Illustrations

(Following p. 247)

**Figure 4.1** Painting by V. Giacomelli, Dante Centenary, 1867, Palazzo Vecchio. Courtesy of Direzione Cultura, Servizio Musei Comunali, Florence.

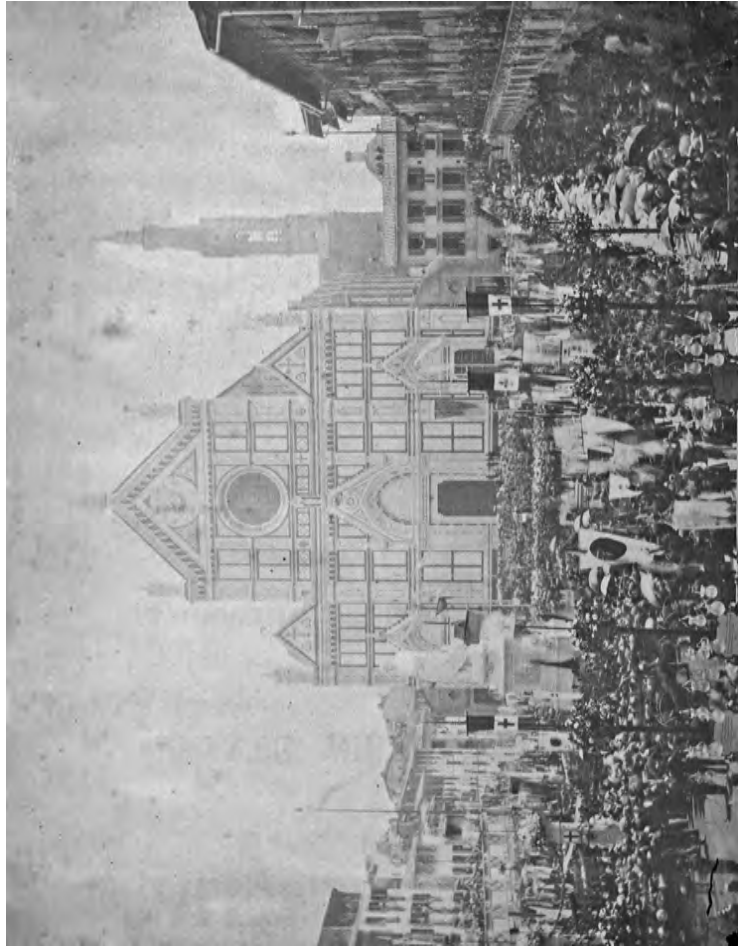
**Figure 4.2** Photograph of the third day of the ceremonies in Piazza Santa Croce, May 16, 1865. Courtesy of Biblioteca Marucelliana, Florence.

I found this photograph in October 1999, inserted in between the bounded pages of the journal *La Festa di Dante* (in the Biblioteca Marucelliana in Florence, carta 114, collocazione 7.H.II.9). Subsequently the picture has been bounded and attached to the *Giornale Del Centenario* (carta 114, collocazione 7.H.II.8). The photograph is without reference and my research has been unable to locate in the archives either the identity of the photographer or the date of the photograph.

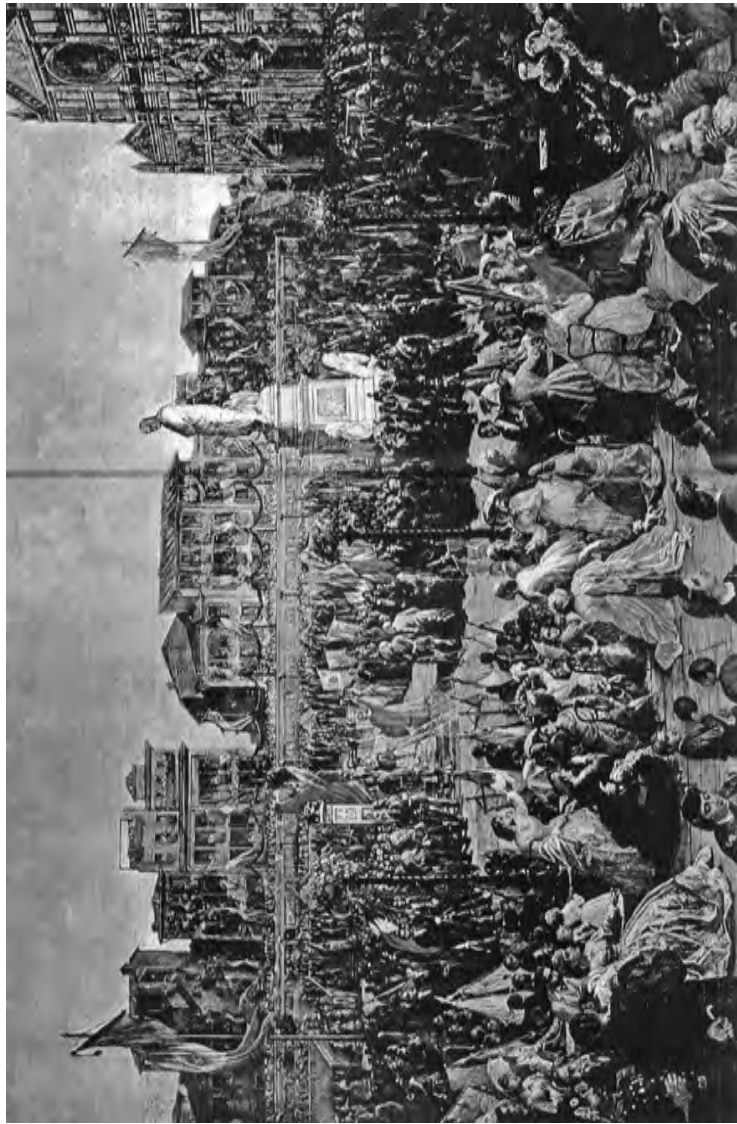
Most surely the scene is not of the first day of the Centenary (May 14, 1865). After comparing the details of the shot with a color painting by Giacomelli reproduced in this book, a lithograph of the event in the Communal Archive of Florence, as well as description of eye witness accounts, I have established that the figure most certainly depicts the third day of the 1865 Centenary: the occasion of the granting of funds to worker societies.

**Figure 4.3** Photograph of the first day of Dante Centenary ceremony at Piazza Santa Croce, from the private album of the Savoy family conserved at the Alinari Archives, Florence. Courtesy of Alinari Archives, Florence.

**Figure 4.4** Watercolor of the first day of the Dante Festa, May 14, 1865. Courtesy of Archivio del Comune di Firenze. Fondo Disegni, AMFCE 0010 (Cass.1, ins.A).



**Figure 4.2** Photograph of the third day of the ceremonies in Piazza Santa Croce, May 16, 1865.  
Courtesy of Biblioteca Marucelliana, Florence.



**Figure 4.1** Painting by V. Giacomelli, Dante Centenary, 1867, Palazzo Vecchio. Courtesy of Direzione Cultura, Servizio Musei Comunali, Florence.



Figure 4.4 Watercolor of the first day of the Dante Festa, May 14, 1865. Courtesy of Archivio del Comune di Firenze. Fondo Disegni, AMFCE 0010 (Cass.1, ins.A).

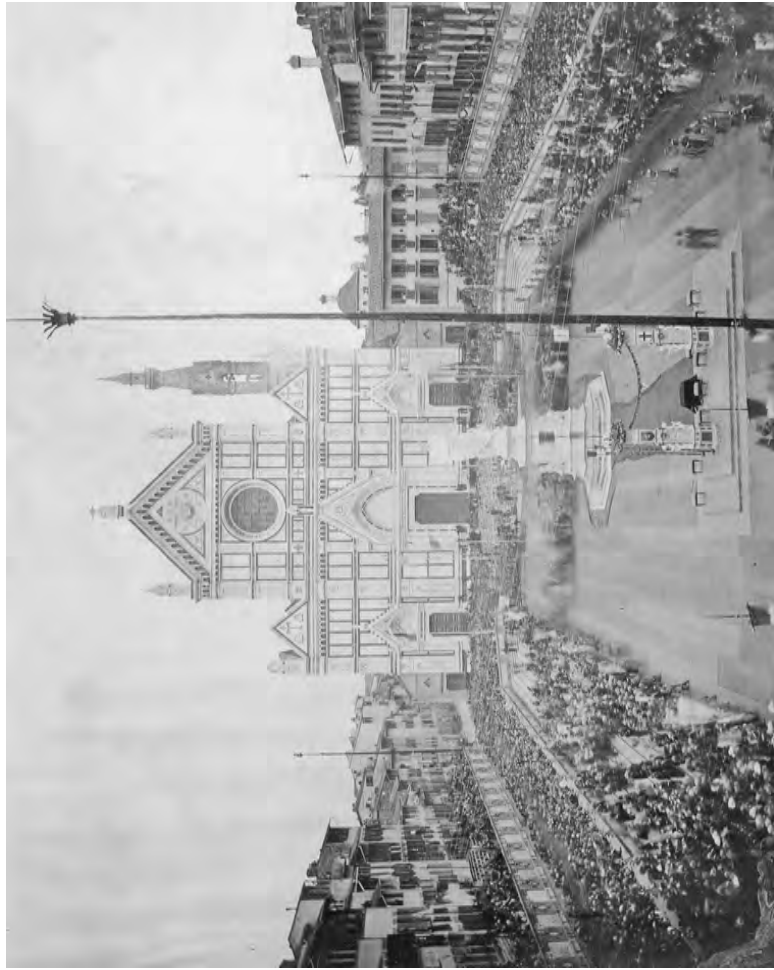


Figure 4.3 Photograph of the first day of Dante Centenary ceremony at Piazza Santa Croce, from the private album of the Savoy family conserved at the Alinari Archives, Florence. Courtesy of Alinari Archives, Florence.

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